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VOLUME V NUMBER 2
1983

Kunapipi is a bi annual arts magazine with special but not exclusive emphasis on the new literatures written in English. It aims to fulfil the requirements T.S. Eliot believed a journal should have: to introduce the work of new or little known writers of talent, to provide critical evaluation of the work of living authors both famous and unknown, and to be truly international. It publishes creative material and criticism. Articles and reviews on related historical and sociological topics plus film will also be included as well as graphics and photographs.

The journal is the bulletin for the European branch of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. As such it offers information about courses, conferences, visiting scholars and writers, scholarships, and literary competitions.

The editor invites creative and scholarly contributions. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with footnotes gathered at the end, should conform to the MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association) Style Sheet and should be accompanied by a return envelope.

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VOLUME V NUMBER 2

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Editorial

As announced in the last issue, we are making some changes in *Kunapipi*. The plan is to bring out three issues a year, in February, June and October. The reason for this is twofold. First we think it is more desirable to have three issues a year. Secondly, by sending out three issues of approximately 125 pages each instead of two of approximately 175, we are able to save in postage which is fast becoming our greatest expense. To mark this change we are also changing our cover, though we would stress that the change in cover does not mean a change in policy.

Finally we would ask our present subscribers to help us find new subscribers, by bringing *Kunapipi* to the attention of their libraries and colleagues, or by giving it as a gift to their friends.

ANNA RUTHERFORD

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THE EDITORS

CONTENTS

FICTION

- Anthony R. Huntington, 'Another Friday Night'* 32

POEMS

- David Dabydeen, 'Guyana Pastoral'* 1
Chris Mansell, 'Amelia Earhart Flies Out From Lac, N.G.' 24
'Gypsy Tap' 26
'The Collected Unconscious' 28
Mark Macleod, 'Show and Tell' 35
John Barnie, 'Home Town' 66
'Fjaltring, NW Jutland' 66
Richard Stevenson, 'Cattle Egrets' 79
Anjana Basu, 'Words for Naren' 80

ARTICLES

- David Dabydeen, 'Commerce and Slavery in Eighteenth Century Literature'* 2
*James Wieland, '«Antipodean eyes»: ways of seeing in Shirley Hazard's *The Transit of Venus*'* 36
Roderick J. Laurence, 'The Order of Things at Home' 50
*Dorothy Jones, '«The Centrique Part»: Theme and Image in Aritha van Herk's Novel *The Tent Peg*'* 70
*Adetokunbo Pearse, 'Apartheid and Madness: Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*'* 81
Joost Daalder, 'Ambiguity and Ambivalence in R.A.K. Mason' 94

- THE YEAR THAT WAS 102

- BOOK REVIEWS 105

- COMING EVENTS 113

- INDEX 1982 115

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The cover: 'A Female Negro Slave with a Weight Chained to her Ankle', engraved by Francis Bartolozzi 1795, in J.G. Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guyana*, London, 1796.

Kunapipi refers to the Australian aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol both of creativity and regeneration. The journal's emblem is to be found on an aboriginal shield from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory in Australia.

David Dabydeen

GUYANA PASTORAL

Under the tambrin tree when de moon na glow,
Laang, laang, laang, she lay, laang, laang
She cry, but de wind na blow
An dem wraang an straang
An dem wuk an dem bruk till fowlcack crow.
Who see who hear when she belly buss, when she mout splash blood?

Only de jumbie umbrella dat poke up e white eye from de mud.

Under de tambrin tree when de sun na shine
Dem tek up spade, dem dig deep hole, dem hide she from deh mine,
She puppa look bush, how he hack, how he halla!
She mumma call priest, kill calf, pray Krishna Christ Allah!
Nine month since dem saach an dem shout, East West Naat Sout.
Who know when she lass, who know when foh fine?

Only de cush-cush ants dat lay dem white egg in she mout.

Commerce and Slavery in Eighteenth Century Literature

THE RAPID INCREASE IN WEALTH

Eighteenth-century Britain experienced a rapid expansion of commerce, with the growth of colonies, the spread of Empire and British domination of the trade in African slaves. 'There was never from the earliest ages,' Samuel Johnson wrote, 'a time in which trade so much engaged the attention of mankind, or commercial gain was sought with such general emulation.'¹ One writer in the *Craftsman* of 1735 described the 'Torrent of Riches, which has been breaking in upon us, for an Age or two past'.² John Brown wrote of 'The Spirit of Commerce, now predominant',³ and Revd. Catcott preached breathlessly on the commercial supremacy of Britain:⁴

In a word, the whole earth is the market of Britain; and while we remain at home safe and undisturbed, have all the products and commodities of the eastern and western *Indies* brought to us in our ships and delivered into our hands ... Our island has put on quite a different face, since the increase of commerce among us ... In a word, commerce is the first mover, the main spring in the political machine, and that which gives life and motion to the whole, and sets all the inferior wheels to work. Thus you see how greatly commerce conduces towards producing plenty, and bringing riches into a nation.

Addison some three decades earlier (*Spectator* No 69) had described London as 'a kind of *Emporium* for the whole Earth', a view echoed, on a national level, in Defoe's *A Tour Thro' the whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-6) with its sense of unbounded progress, agricultural, commercial and industrial.

The age therefore, whilst being one of 'High Culture' (the rise of British art, the establishment of tastes for Italianate music and architecture, and a general cultivation of 'civilized' values) was to a greater extent an age of commercial achievements. As J.A. Doyle puts it, 'if the

eighteenth century was the age of Addison and Horace Walpole, it was in a far more abiding sense the age of Chatham and Wolfe and Clive'.³ The great trading companies established in the previous century flourished and there was a general sense of the manifold possibilities of money-making, of financial development through international trade and commerce with the colonies. 'The dynamic drive of the period was grossly material', as Seymour has written.⁴ Schemes for making money, by taking out patents on new inventions, abounded, as did speculation in the stock of all kinds of Companies, the mood of financial adventurism reaching a giddy height in the South Sea period of 1720, the South Sea disaster being the first great crisis in British capitalism.

'It is money that sells all, money buys all, money pays all, money makes all, money mends all, and money mars all': 'tis Money makes the Man'; 'All Things are to be had for Money'; 'Money, th' only Pow'r ... the last Reason of all Things'; 'Money answers all Things': these are the often repeated maxims of the Age. The greater proportion of this money was derived from the traffic in human beings, the buying and selling of African peoples and the enforced labour of these peoples. The Slave Trade was of vast economic importance to the financial existence of Britain. L'Abbé le Blanc in one of his *Letters* of 1747 declared that the overwhelming proportion of England's wealth was derived from its colonies which depended on the labour of black slaves for their production of riches.⁵ It was the revenue derived from Slavery and the Slave Trade which helped to finance the Industrial Revolution.⁶ In seventeenth and eighteenth-century opinion Blacks were 'the strength and sinews of this western world', the slave trade 'the spring and parent whence the others flow', 'the first principle and foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion', 'the Hinge on which all the Trade of this Globe moves on' and 'the best traffick the kingdom hath'.⁷ Defoe in his own blunt fashion summarized the role of Blacks in the Western economy:

The case is as plain as cause and consequence: Mark the climax. No African trade, no negroes, no sugars, ginger, indigos etc; no sugars etc no islands; no islands no continent; no continent no trade.⁸

The profits from the slave trade were seen as benefiting the whole British nation without exception: as one writer in 1790 stated,

*there is not a Man in this Kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, who does not more or less partake of the Benefits and Advantages of the Royal African Company's PORTS and CASTLES in Africa.*⁹

Other writers told of the 'immensely great' profits made by sugar planters who have 'remitted over their Effects, and purchas'd large Estates in England', of the 'many private Persons in England [who] daily gain great Estates in every Branch of the Trade' and of investors in the African Company who have 'for Sixty Years past, got great Estates out of the Subscriptions'.¹² West Indian merchants and planters educated their children in Britain and supported them in a state of opulence; thousands of black slaves were also brought to Britain by returning merchants and planters.¹³ These businessmen, and the Directors of the Royal African Company were important figures in British society, men of considerable social status ('A Society of the poliest Gentlemen ... in the known World', as James Houstoun wrote in 1725)¹⁴ and political influence.

The trade in black people was at the time justified on economic and moral grounds. Slavery was right and allowable, the argument ran, because it was profitable and therefore 'necessary'. According to Defoe

[It is] an Advantage to our Manufacturers, an increasing the Employment of the Poor, a Support to our General Commerce, and an Addition to the General Stock of the Nation.¹⁵

Defoe spoke of 'the absolute Necessity' of the Slave Trade, again of the fact that

The African trade is absolutely necessary to be supported ... Negroes are as essential to the Sugar Works at Barbadoes, Jamaica ... as Wind is to the Ships that bring it Home.¹⁶

Grovenor in Parliament admitted euphemistically that the Slave Trade 'was an unamiable one' but added with no recognition of the callousness of his comparison that

so also were many others; the trade of a butcher was an unamiable trade: but it was a very necessary one, notwithstanding.¹⁷

The term 'necessity' appears again and again in works excusing the Slave Trade. William Bosman for instance, writing in 1706, admits that 'I doubt not but this Trade seems very barbarous to you, but since it is followed by meer necessity it must go on'. William Snelgrave some thirty years afterwards echoed Bosman's sentiments:

This traffic in human Creatures, may at first sight appear barbarous, inhuman and unnatural; yet the Traders herein have as much to plead in their own Excuse, as can be said for some other Branches of Trade, namely, the Advantage of it.¹⁸

Such a brutal economic rationale was indicative of the materialist mood of the Age, one which saw profit as the main criterion of behaviour, and morality only as a secondary consideration.

The moral justification of the Slave Trade ranged from the argument that the trade was 'benevolent' in that it provided poor white people with employment, to the argument that the Slave Trade saved Africans from the bloody tyranny of their own countrymen and from being eaten by their fellow cannibals. As John Dunton put it, 'they must either be *killed* or *eaten*, or both, by their barbarous conquering enemy'.¹⁰ James Grainger, James Boswell, Edward Long and others were all agreed on the compassionate nature of Slavery, using exact arguments as Dunton's.¹¹ One writer in 1740 spoke not of 'enslaving' blacks but of 'rather ransoming the Negroes from their national Tyrants' by transplanting them to the colonies where 'under the benign Influences of the Law, and Gospel, they are advanced to much greater Degrees of Felicity, tho' not to absolute Liberty'.¹²

Viewing the African as a primitive, sub-human creature was necessary to the whole business of slavery since it avoided or made easy any problems of morality: Christians were not enslaving human beings, for blacks were not fully human. Africans embodied all the qualities that Lord Chesterfield, a self-conscious gentleman of taste and culture, abhorred. According to Chesterfield Africans were 'the most ignorant and unpolished people in the world, little better than lions, tigers, leopards, and other wild beasts, which that country produces in great numbers'. It was thus morally acceptable 'to buy a great many of them to sell again to advantage in the West Indies'.¹³ An indication of the primitivism of the African was the supposed absence of manufactures, sciences, arts, and systems of commerce within African society. It was repeatedly asserted that blacks were ignorant, unskilled and undeveloped creatures, their lack of scientific, industrial and commercial knowledge accounting for their savage morality.

THE LITERARY RESPONSE: COMMERCE AND CIVILIZATION

Many eighteenth-century men of letters were directly involved in the Business world, either holding prominent Government posts, or else holding investments in financial schemes and companies, or else writing on money matters. 'Writing upon Trade was the Whore I really doted upon', Defoe confessed in a *Review* article.¹⁸ Defoe's financial schemes and his publications on trade are too well known for repetition. Other literary figures, Addison, Cleland, Steele, Swift, Pope, Prior and Smollett, among others, were in one way or another connected with the world of commerce. Addison for example was a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations; Cleland, a Commissioner of land tax and house duties; Smollett was a surgeon on a slaveship, and married a colonial heiress whose family owned slaves and plantations in Jamaica.

Inevitably, perhaps, a great deal of eighteenth-century literature concerned itself with financial matters. As T.K. Meier has written,

literary men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Dryden, Pope, Steele, Thomson, most of the georgic poets, and a number of lesser dramatists, essayists, and poets did heap high praise upon both the concept of capitalistic business enterprise and upon businessmen who practiced it ... Commerce and industry had caught the literary imagination of the period and represented for a time at least, the progressive hope of the future.¹⁹

Bonamy Dobrée in discussing eighteenth-century poetry has described commerce as 'the great theme that calls forth the deepest notes from poets of the period'. No other theme, Dobrée writes, 'can compare in volume, in depth, in vigour of expression, in width of imagination, with the full diaspora of commerce'.²⁰

Poets like Thomson, Glover, Young, Gaugh, Cockings and Dyer celebrated commerce as the catalyst of social, cultural and economic progress. Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* (1748) views urban development, the establishment of Empire and the expansion of markets as laudable ideals; his 'Knight of Industry' is an imperialist and property developer, creating a city out of undeveloped land, just as Defoe's Crusoe transforms his desert island into a flourishing town:

Then towns he quicken'd by mechanic arts,
And bade the fervent city flow with toil;
Bade social commerce raise renowned marts,
Join land to land, and marry soil to soil,
Unite the poles, and without bloody spoil
Bring home of either Ind the gorgeous stores. (Canto 2, Stanza XX)

In *The Seasons — Autumn* Thomson traces, approvingly, the long historical process whereby the city rises out of the wilderness, with the evolution of man from the horrors of a primitive existence into a blissful state of commercial and scientific activity. Glover's *London: Or, the Progress of Commerce* (4th ed., 1739) celebrates, in a similar vein, the development of nature and the growth of the city through commerce:

... She in lonely sands
Shall bid the tow'r — encircled city rise.
The barren sea shall people, and the wilds
Of dreary nature shall with plenty cloath. (l. 127 f.)

It is commerce that has awakened the whole world from its primitive slumber, bringing development, progress and civilization:

... thou beganst
Thy all-enlivening progress o'er the globe
The rude and joyless ... (l. 173 f.)

Urban development is the theme too in poems like Cockings' *Arts, Manufactures, And Commerce*, Gaugh's *Britannia* and Young's *The Merchant*.²⁷ The sense of the limitless possibilities of expansion and gain is given perfect expression by Young as he urges Englishmen to seize the present opportunities of commerce:

Rich Commerce ply with Warmth divine
By Day, by Night; the Stars are Thine
Wear out the Stars in Trade! Eternal run
From Age to Age, the noble Glow,
A Rage to gain, and to bestow,
Whilst Ages last! In Trade burn out the Sun! (*Merchant*, p. 98)

In this poem Young's model of the world is a purely economic one, the relationship between earth, sea and air seen as a series of commercial transactions:

Earth's Odours pay soft Airs above;
That o'er the seeming Field proffers range;
Planets are Merchants, take, return
Lustre and Heat; by Traffic burn;
The whole Creation is one vast Exchange. (*Merchant*, p. 91)

The kindling of commercial activity is compared to natural awakenings, to the rain from heaven which cheers the glebe, activates the bees and

rouses the flowers. Blake may have seen 'a Heaven in a Wild Flower' (*Auguries of Innocence*, l. 2), but Young is more down-to-earth.

Such a commercial response to Nature is a distinguishing feature of much of eighteenth-century literature. Defoe is notorious in this respect. As H.N. Fairchild has written,

Crusoe remains unmoved by wild scenery. For him, storms are simply wet and dangerous, hills are to be ascended in the hope of sighting a passing sail, trees are to be hacked into shelters, and animals are to be classified into edible and inedible.²⁴

Lillo's vision is decidedly unromantic — young Wilmot, landing in England after an absence in the American colonies, pauses to bestow customary praise:

O England! England!
Thou seat of plenty, liberty and health,
With transport I behold thy verdant fields,
Thy lofty mountains rich with useful ore.²⁵

Wordsworth's Solitary, in *The Excursion*, expatiating on the effects of mountains on the mind and soul of man would not have been practical enough for young Wilmot. If Wordsworth had been pained by the memory of having, as a child, broken the branches of a tree, Cockings displayed no such sensitivity: his poem *Arts, Manufactures, And Commerce* (c. 1769) described in an exuberant manner the cutting up of trees at a saw-mill, Cockings expressing great wonder at the mechanical genius of the process: the saw-mill spreads its sails to the skies to catch the winds which

urge by Cranks, and the coercive Wheel,
Thro' Twenty Cuts, the Fang'd corrosive Seed;
By gentle Traction, ev'ry Tree to guide
Against the Saw, which shall its Trunk divide;
Whilst other Wheels, destin'd for diff'rent Use,
Perform their Work ... (p. 16)

Trees existed to be cut down and fashioned into merchant ships; when one writer described 'beautiful Forests', he meant not their aesthetic qualities but their commercial potential: 'The farther one advances into the Country, the more beautiful Forests are found, full of Gummy Trees, fit to make Pitch for Ships; as also infinite Stores of Trees fit for Masts.'²⁶

The consensus of opinion in many pieces of eighteenth-century literature is that commerce is a wonderful activity, creative of progress, culture and civilization. Glover writes of the mathematics, philosophy, poetry and laws that result from commerce:

Barbarity is polish'd, infant arts
Bloom in the desert, and benignant peace
With hospitality, begin to soothe
Unsocial rapine, and the thirst of blood.³²

Young makes similar claims for the civilizing power of commerce:

Commerce gives Arts, as well as Gain;
By Commerce watch'd o'er the Main.
They barbarous Climes enlighten as they run;
Arts the rich Traffic of the Soul
May travel thus, from Pole to Pole.
And gild the World with Learning's brighter Sun. (*Merchant*, p. 74)

The contact between men as a result of mutual trade is seen as conducive to tolerance, morality and culture, a claim that finds concise expression in the anonymous eighteenth-century essay entitled *Thoughts On Commerce And Liberty*:

An extensive trade and flourishing manufactories, tend to soften the manners of men, to render them capable of social impressions, to extend their views over the habitable globe, and to eradicate narrow prejudices . . . Hence that general improvement in the habits of life, that refinement in the public taste and sentiments; in short all those intellectual and moral acquisitions which dignify mankind.³³

The merchant, the agent of commerce, was also celebrated as the agent of progress and civilization, the embodiment of civilized standards derived from his commercial experience. As Defoe puts it, the merchant is 'the most intelligent man in the world':

His learning excels the mere scholar in Greek and Latin . . . He understands languages without books . . . geography without maps . . . he sits in his counselling-house and converses with all nations, and keeps up the most exquisite and extensive part of human society in a universal correspondence.³⁴

No praise was great enough to lavish upon him, all poetic eulogies fell short of their mark:

Is Merchant an inglorious Name?
 No; fit for Pindar such a Theme,
 Too great for Me, I pant beneath the Weight
 If load, as Ocean's were my Voice.
 If Words and Thoughts to court my Choice
 Oun-number'd Sands, I could not reach his Height.²⁴

The merchant was also seen as a force for liberty, 'Liberty' being a key word in literature celebrating commerce. Commerce meant the rise of the middle-class which as it gained political influence sought protection from the tyranny and arbitrary laws of the aristocratic class, its main ambition being the legal protection of property. Hence Young's verse:

Trade, gives fair Virtue fairer will to shine;
 Enacts those Guards of Gain, the Laws;
 Enacts even Freedom's glorious Cause. (*Merchant*, p. 96)

Commerce and Liberty were seen as depending upon, and reinforcing, each other, a point Voltaire made in one of his *Philosophical Letters*: 'Commerce which has enriched the citizens of England has helped to make them free, and that liberty in turn has expanded commerce. This is the foundation of the greatness of the state.'²⁵

There was, as C. A. Moore has said, 'one dark blot' in this bright picture of progress, civilization and liberty through commerce: 'There was one dark blot. The one detail out of moral keeping was the slave traffic.'²⁶ Slavery was such an undeniably crucial aspect of colonial and international commerce that the men of letters could not avoid touching on the subject. Their problem was how to reconcile their belief in the civilizing effects of commerce to the barbaric realities of the Slave Trade. Cornelius Arnold and John Dyer provided one way out of the dilemma. Arnold interrupts briefly his eulogy on commerce to express perfunctory regret at the fact of African slavery, but he blames the Africans for the existence of the Slave Trade, the argument being that Africans, in their civil wars, capture their fellow countrymen and sell them into slavery:

... Onward they [i.e. British merchants] steer their Course,
 To Afric's parched Clime, whose sooty Sons,
 Thro' Rage of civil Broils ... hard Destiny!
 Forc'd from their native home to Western Ind,
 In Slavery drag the galling Chain of Life.²⁷

Dyer's *Fleece* (1757) contains a similar perfunctory pity for the condition of the black, Dyer not wishing to appear inhumane and uncivilized; nevertheless the Black is shouldered with the blame for slavery:

On Guinea's sultry strand, the drap'ry light
 Of Manchester or Norwich is bestow'd
 For clear transparent gums, and ductile wax,
 And snow-white ivory; yet the valued trade
 Along this barbarous coast, in selling, wounds
 The generous heart, the sale of wretched slaves;
 Slaves, by their tribes condemn'd, exchanging death
 For life-long servitude; severe exchange! (Book 4, l. 189 f.)

Young and Glover deal with the problem of slavery in different ways. There is in Young's poem a brief, scornful reference to Blacks, describing, of all things, their laziness: '...*Afric's* black, lascivious, slothful Breed,/ To clasp their *Ruin*, fly from *Toil*...' (Merchant, p. 106). Africa is attacked because it does not practise the principles of capitalist development which Young celebrates, the African being seen as ignorant of the principles of science and commerce:

Of Nature's Wealth from Commerce rent,
Afric's a glaring Monument:
 Mid *Citron* Forests and *Pomegranate* Groves
 (Cur'd in a *Paradise*) the pine;
 O'er generous *Glebe*, o'er *golden* Mines
 Her *bagger'd*, *famish'd*, Tradeless Natives roves. (Merchant, p. 107)

Young, in an indirect way, is saying that slavery is a benevolent institution, since it teaches the African the virtues of labour. Glover, though equally deceitful, is not so breathtakingly perverse; his poem²⁹ attacks the Spanish for enslaving and destroying the Indian natives but he makes no reference to the British participation in slavery and British treatment of the Africans — his poem was written in 1739 when anti-Spanish sentiment was running high in Britain, British traders angry at the liberties taken by Spanish merchants and jealous of Spanish commercial rivalry, a rivalry that erupted into war in 1739 (the 'War of Jenkins' Ear'). Glover's reference to slavery, and Indian slavery at that, is merely political therefore.

Another way of reckoning with slavery whilst being faithful to the ethic of commerce was to minimize the brutality of the trade through careful choice of diction. James Grainger for example, in his poem *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) strives to reduce the horror of slavery by 'wrapping it up in a napkin of poetic diction'.³⁰ *The Sugar-Cane* is as good an example as any of the way in which 'the raw materials of human experience were habitually transmuted in eighteenth-century poetry'.³¹ Instead of 'slave-owner', Grainger prefers to use the term 'Master-Swain'; he prefers 'Assistant Planter' to the term 'slave'. The use of poetical phrases such as

'Afric's sable progeny' to describe the Black slaves further softens the stark realities of their actual condition. It is such callous abstractions that provoked Samuel Johnson's attack on Grainger's acceptance of slavery.

Picturesque descriptions of slave labour and the slave environment was another feature of pro-commerce literature. Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* contained idyllic descriptions of the golden cane-fields with their contentedly laborious black swains, 'Well-fed, well cloath'd, all emulous to gain/ Their master's smile, who treated them like men'. The author of *The Pleasures of Jamaica* written some three decades before, presented a view of slave plantations that was similarly picturesque:

Hither retiring, to avoid the heat,
We find refreshment in a cool retreat.
Each rural object gratifies the sight,
And yields the mind an innocent delight;
Greens of all shades the different plants adorn,
Here the young cane, and there the growing corn:
In verdant pastures interspers'd between,
The lowing herds, and bleating flocks are seen.
With joy his lord the faithful Negro sees,
And in his way endeavours how to please;
Greets his return with his best country song,
The lively dance, and tuneful merry wong,
When nature by the cane has done her part,
Which ripen'd now demands the help of art.
How pleasant are the labours of the mill,
While the rich streams the boiling coppers fill.⁴¹

As one of the characters in La Vallée's anti-slavery novel explains to the African, avarice 'borrows the voice and colours of fiction. Fiction gilds your chains...'⁴²

The fact is that many of the pro-commerce writers who either justified slavery or minimized its inhumanity were in one way or another involved in the profits to be made from slavery. Glover, for instance, was the son of a merchant, and also a Member of Parliament. Glover was noted for his defence of West India merchants before Parliament. In 1742 a petition drawn up by Glover and signed by 300 merchants complaining of the inadequate protection of English trade, was presented to Parliament. Glover afterwards attended to sum up their evidence before the House of Commons. In 1775 he received a plate worth £300 from West India merchants in acknowledgement of his services to them. His will mentions property in the City of London and in South Carolina. Cornelius Arnold was in later life beadle to the Distillers Company with its interests in West India sugar. Grainger, who died in St Christopher in

1766 was married to the daughter of a Nevis planter, and took charge of his wife's uncle's plantations; he invested his savings in the purchase of negroes.⁴³

The involvement in the economic benefits of slavery meant a warped ethical response to it. We catch the sense of, to use Dr Johnson's phrase, 'a wealth beyond the dreams of avarice', in William Goldwin's poem *Great Britain: Or, The Happy Isle* (1705), specifically in the compounded descriptive phrases like 'Massy heaps of shining Treasure':

See! How the Busy Merchant Ploughs the Main
In Vessels big with weighty Heaps of Gain; ...
Huge Loads of Wealth, the distant World's Entreat

The feeling of great wealth is carried over in Goldwin's poem on Bristol⁴⁴ in which the sole reference to slavery is an indirect one — 'Jamaica's Growth, or Guinea's Golden-dust'; also in R.J. Thorn's *Bristolia* (1794): 'Around the quays, in countless heaps appear, / Bales pil'd on bales, and loads of foreign ware.' As C.A. Moore says, 'the conscience of the public was so blinded to the moral issue by the widespread participation in dividends that it was very difficult to bring independent judgment or sentiment to bear upon the subject'.⁴⁵

THE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO COMMERCE

The alternative response to the wealth pouring into society took many forms. To begin with there was a sense of the physical ugliness and the despoilation of the landscape resulting from commercial and industrial activity. Goldwin's response to the growing signs of industrialization, for example, is more ambivalent than Dyer's or Thorne's. In Dyer's *Fleeces*, the smoke rising over Leeds was described as 'incense' and praised as signs of industrial activity. Thorn's *Bristolia* (*op. cit.*) was also optimistic about industrial fumes — standing upon Brandon Hill like a latterday Moses upon Pisgah, he surveyed the promised land of money and machinery: 'Here, whilst I stand, what clouds of smoke appear / From different work-shops, and dissolve in air!'

Goldwin, in his *A Poetical Description of Bristol* (*op. cit.*), whilst celebrating the city's commercial and manufacturing wealth, rejects the accompanying destruction of nature. The primitive, natural beauty of Kingswood Forest,

... a cluster'd Wood of bushy Trees,
Whose hamper'd Boughs, an artless Straggling show,
And, like the savage Natives, shaggy grow (p. 4)

is seen as being threatened with destruction by coalmining activity. The miners, 'a tatter'd Brood of rough laborious Souls', who burrow through subterranean holes like earthworms, forsaking the 'Blessing of the purer Air', are pictured tearing 'Magazines of Coals from Nature's Bowel'. The mine and miners present a 'horrid' sight to the eye. Towards the end of the poem Goldwin launches an attack on the ugliness and pollution of a glass manufacturing works —

Thick dark'ning Clouds in curling smoky Wreaths,
Whose sooty Stench the Earth and Sky annoys,
And Nature's blooming Verdure half destroys. (p. 19)

The sulphur emitted from the factory's chimney 'blasts the Fruit of fair Sicilia's Fields'. Goldwin's poem ends with a paean on natural beauty, the 'Grotesque' rocks and cliffs along the river which 'afright the climbing Eye' in a different way from the 'horrid' sight of the coalmine. Goldwin's anxieties about progress accumulate throughout the eighteenth century, culminating in the next in Mrs Gaskell's polluted Milton in *North and South* and Dickens' Coketown in *Hard Times*, a pessimism about progress perfectly expressed in Hopkins' *Cod's Grandeur*:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge, and shares man's smell ...

Bound up with the disgust at the physical pollution created by 'progress' was a sense of the city as a hideous, dirty, chaotic phenomenon. The pro-commerce writers may have celebrated the evolution of the city from the barren wilderness as a sign of civilization, but others — Pope, Swift, Gay, Smollett — depicted the city as corrupt, putrid and anarchic to the point of insanity. London is depicted as a gigantic Bedlam riddled with crime and disease, as Max Byrd in his recent study of the image of the city in eighteenth-century Literature has shown. "A prose essay of the 1750s, inspired by Hogarth's prints and addressed to Hogarth, entitled *Low Life; or, One Half of the World, knows not how the Other Half Lives*" presented more powerfully and memorably than any other piece of eighteenth-century Literature, a picture of the city as a hive of criminal activity. The energy of the city is in the scramble for money and the uncontrollable kleptomania — pickpockets, prostitutes, pimps, coin-

clippers, forgers, gamblers, smugglers, pawnbrokers and the rest are united in a frenzied pursuit of money. They 'cannibalize' each other, and even the dying or the dead are not exempted from the process of exploitation — nurses keeping vigil by the bedside of the dying take advantage of the situation by rifling through their pockets; sextons of parish-churches dig up the corpses buried the previous day to sell to anatomists.

If the spirit of commerce was seen as having stimulated crime it was also seen as having created inhumane attitudes in people, a selfishness and hardness of heart. Lovell described the soullessness of Bristolians who are motivated only by 'sordid wealth': 'Foul as their streets, triumphant meanness sways,/ And groveling as their mud-compelling drays.'⁴¹ Bristolians have become mere emblems of money, devoid of 'the nobler cares of mind', 'soft humanities', 'mild urbanity' and 'sympathetic feeling': 'In all his sons the mystic signs we trace,/ Pounds, shillings, pence, appear in every face.'⁴² Another eighteenth-century observer of Bristolians described how 'their Souls are engrossed by lucre', with the more gentle qualities of mind 'banished from their republic as a contagious disease'.⁴³

Both Dyer and Thomson in their eulogies on commerce had asserted its benevolent effect upon the labouring classes in raising their standard of living to glorious levels. According to Thomson, commerce fuelled by the spirit of liberty has enriched the whole nation — 'The poor man's lot with milk and honey flows'.⁴⁴ Although the principle of subordination still holds sway in society, the wealth derived from commerce is equally enjoyed, Thomson claimed:

... And though to different ranks
Responsive place belongs, yet equal spreads
The sheltering roof o'er all, and plenty flows, ,
And glad contentment echoes round the whole.⁴⁵

Dyer's *Fleece* similarly described the national benefits of industry which 'lifts the swain,/ And the straw cottage to a palace turns' (Book 3, l. 332). Other writers were more realistic than Thomson and Dyer, recognising an unequal distribution of wealth and a stark division in society between the have and have-nots. 'Under the present Stage of Trade', John Brown wrote,

the Increase of Wealth is by no means equally or proportionally diffused: The Trader reaps the main Profit: after him, the Landlord, in a lower Degree: But the common Artificer, and still more the common Labourer, gain little by the exorbitant Advance of Trade.⁴⁶

Another writer, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1735, told of the way wealth is concentrated in a few hands:

The Complaint of our Day is, that the Body of the People is growing poor, and obliged to undergo the greatest Hardships, whilst a few Upstarts in Office are accumulating immense Riches, and rioting in all the Excesses of Luxury. (p. 717)

Thomas Bedford in a sermon bitterly attacking commerce, colonialization and slavery observed that because trade and commerce had introduced inflation in Britain and a more expensive manner of living, 'the bulk of its people may still continue poor, in the midst of a thousand like advantages'.⁵¹

Those who attacked commerce as a force for squalor and degradation focussed increasingly on slavery for the substance of their views. The bulk of British anti-slavery literature was written in the latter part of the century, spurred on by the propaganda of the Abolition Movement, but by 1750 there was already considerable public awareness of the brutality of the Slave Trade. Hence Postlewayt in 1746 produced a tract in defence of slavery, to counter the

Many [who] are prepossessed against this Trade,
thinking it a barbarous, inhuman, and unlawful
Traffic for a Christian Country to Trade in Blacks.⁵²

The 'many' included the Quakers, John Dunton, Ralph Sandiford, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Charles Gildon, Joseph Warton, Richard Savage, and others. Even Defoe had at one time written anti-slavery verse, denouncing the slavetraders and their brand of Christianity:

Others seek out to Africk's Torrid Zone,
And search the burning Shores of Serralone;
There in unsufferable Heats they fry,
And run vast Risques to see the Gold, and die
The harmless Natives barely they trepan,
And barter Baubles for the Souls of Men;
The Wretches they to Christian Climes bring o'er,
To serve worse Heathens than they did before.
The Cruelties they suffer there are such,
*Amboyne's nothing, they've out-done the Dutch.*⁵³

Later in the century Thomas Bradshaw was to describe slave merchants and their apologists as 'monsters assuming the human shape';⁵⁴ the anonymous author of the poem of 1765 entitled *Patriotism* was to use

images of cannibalism in describing the merchant as he worshipped and sacrificed before the altar of Commerce:

The victims dire Religion bade him call,
All without blemish, all of blackest wool,
All newly bought, all newly flay'd alive,
A hecatomb, of Negro slaves twice five.
He on their teeling muscles, red and blue
Sharp vinegar, with salt and pepper threw;
They writh'd with pain convuls'd. As when to cram
Some citizen's unfathomable wem,
The Turtle, riven with his maul, poor fish!
Perceives himself to grow a dish,
Convuls'd, each undulating fibre plays
In waves of agony a thousand ways.⁵⁸

The dilemma over the slave trade mentioned earlier, that is, a recognition of its immorality and yet at the same time its profitability, was one aspect of the general dilemma of the age in its attempt to reconcile the moral with the economic. 'Religion is one thing, trade is another'⁵⁹ – it is this separation between the two, or, as Andersen puts it, 'the withdrawal of economic affairs from the jurisdiction of morality'⁶⁰ which posed crucial, central problems at the time to many writers on economic matters. Davenant for instance recognised the evils resulting from trade but also its 'necessity' in terms of Britain's continued supremacy over its rivals and competitors:

Trade, without doubt, is in its nature a pernicious thing; it brings in that Wealth which introduces Luxury; it gives a rise to Fraud and Avarice, and extinguishes Virtue and Simplicity of Manners; it depraves a People and makes for that Corruption which never fails to end in Slavery, Foreign or Domestic. Licurgus, in the most perfect Model of Government that was ever fram'd, did banish it from his Commonwealth. But, the Posture and Condition of other Countries consider'd, 'tis become with us a necessary Evil.⁶¹

Some fifty years later John Brown came up against the same hurdle – he rails against the luxury and immorality created by the wealth from commerce, but realizes that to discourage or curtail such commerce would lead to national decline with rival countries overtaking Britain in economic and military might. 'Thus are we fallen into a kind of Dilemma',⁶² Brown muses, uncertain of the solution. The dilemma was also faced by some pro-slavery writers, particularly on the issue of baptising and Christianising Blacks. Slaveowners, one apologist pointed out in 1730,⁶³ were reluctant to educate their slaves to the Christian Gospel

because of the economic costs. The slaves would have to be given time off work to attend Bible classes which would mean a loss in production. This would be 'too great an Invasion on the Property of the Masters'. If for instance, the writer calculates, a planter were to allow one-fifth of his total collection of one hundred slaves to be educated once a fortnight in the Gospel, and estimating that each slave made six pence profit per day for his owner, then the owner would lose a whole £13 per annum, and £65 per annum if he let all his blacks be educated; to educate all the hundred thousand blacks in the West Indies would cost a massive sum of £65,000. As to the morality of the Slave Trade itself the writer does not deny that 'Millions of Lives it destroys', but stresses that it is still 'absolutely necessary' for reasons of national supremacy — Britain, France, Spain, Holland and Portugal are all involved in the Slave Trade and

were any of them to break it off on the Topick of Unlawfulness, they would soon lose their Share in the Profits arising from it, which is hardly to be expected from them unless their Neighbours could be prevail'd to drop theirs too. (p. 15)

Because of this international competition, the writer concludes, it is unlikely that the Slave Trade will decline, unless God personally intervened!

Finally there was in the eighteenth century a recoil from the materialism of the Age which manifested itself in an embracing of notions about the benefits of a simple, non-commercial existence. There were those who reacted against the progress, development, commercialism and industrialization celebrated by Dyer, Young, Glover *et al.*, by asserting the virtuousness of a primitive, natural lifestyle. The African's and the Indian's ignorance of the arts, the sciences and the principles of trade, far from being indicative of his sub-human status as asserted by some, were viewed as positive qualities in his favour. John Winstanley's paean on the natural life, entitled *The Happy Savage*,⁴⁴ reacts against the materialist civilization of the European and praises the simplicity of the savage's lifestyle. 'Happy the lonely Savage', Winstanley exclaims, who has not been 'taught by Wisdom/ Numberless Woes, nor polish'd into Torment', and who is 'of all human Arts/ Happily ignorant'. His 'rude artless Mind' is as 'Uncultivated as the Soil'. Winstanley's poem appeared in 1732; such primitivist notions must have been rife in the 1730s for in 1736 Bishop Berkeley (who owned slaves) dismissed them as 'among the

many wild Notions broached in these giddy times'.⁵⁰ There was a substantial amount of literature throughout the century on the 'noble savage'. John Gay's *Polly*, written in 1729 as the sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, and set in the West Indies, contrasts the noble, non-commercial and honest Indians against the vicious, sexually impure and avaricious Englishmen. Joseph Warton's *The Enthusiast*, a poem written in 1740, celebrates the 'genial untill'd earth' and the happy innocence of the American Indian in opposition to the corrupt materialist commercial and industrial environment of England, its 'smoky cities' and the rest:

Oh who will bear me then to western climes,
(Since Virtue leaves our wretched land) to fields
Yet unpolluted with Iberian swords;
The Isles of Innocence, from mortal view
Deeply retir'd, beneath a plantain's shade,
Where Happiness and Quiet sit enthron'd
With simple Indian swains, that I may hunt
The boar and tiger through savannahs wild,
Through fragrant deserts, and through cypress-graves?
There fed on dates and herbs, would I despise
The far-fetch'd cares of Luxury, and hoards
Of narrow-hearted Avarice; nor heed
The distant din of the tumultuous world.

Charles Churchill in his poem *Gotham* of 1764 praises the 'artless' savage and satirises the greed of Christian colonialists and slavetraders. Gerald Fitzgerald in a later poem, *The Injured Islanders* (1779) attacks the white man's commercial and industrial 'progress' which is blamed for destroying the purity and innocence of primitive societies in the process of colonialization. The savages were 'fortunate in the Ignorance and Simplicity', and Fitzgerald's savage hero Obera longs for

Some placid Corner of the boundless Main
Unmark'd by Science, unexplor'd by Gain,
Where Nature still her Empire safe may hold
From foreign Commerce, Confidence, and Gold,
From foreign Arts — from all that's foreign free.

Expressed in such literature on the 'noble savage' is the belief that the innocent savage, whether Indian or African, has been corrupted by contact with the European whose civilization amounts to nothing but financial greed, sexual disease and blood-letting conflicts. Civilizing the savage has meant introducing him or her to the commercial and sexual vices of European society. Far from being a peripheral aspect of

eighteenth-century literature, the 'noble savage' convention represented the deepest reaction against the materialism of the age, a convention that has endured, albeit with modifications, by way of the Romantics into the twentieth century, with the 'savage pilgrimage' of D.H. Lawrence.

NOTES

1. Quoted by Lois Whitney in her book *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* (Baltimore, 1954), p. XVIII.
2. Reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 5, 1735, pp. 717-18.
3. John Brown, *An Estimate Of The Manners And Principles Of The Times* (2nd Edition, London, 1757), p. 22.
4. Revd A.S. Carson, *The Antiquity and Honourableness Of the Practice of Merchandize: A Sermon* (Bristol, 1704), pp. 13, 14, 15.
5. Cited in A.A. Erlinger's *James Edward Oglethorpe: Imperial Ideals* (Oxford, 1956), p. 110.
6. Thaddeus Seymour, *Literature and the South Sea Bubble* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Chapel Hill, 1953), p. 12.
7. *Maxims of Wisdom for Gaining Wealth* (London, 1788), p. 30; *Put Money in your Purse* (London, 1754), l. 321; *The Universal Merchant* (London, 1753), p. 6; *A Trip To Liverpool... In Search of Fortunatus's Purse* (London, 1796), title-page quoting Butler's *Hudibras*; Jacob Vanderlint, *Money answers all Things* (London, 1754).
8. Cited in E.J. Hobsbawm's *Industry and Empire* (Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 25-6.
9. Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 52; James Walvin, *The Black Presence* (London, 1971), p. 8.
10. Eric Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 51; James Houston, *Some New and Accurate Observations... Of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1725), p. 48; Peter Hogg, *Slavery: The Afro American Experience* (BL Publication, London, 1979), p. 3.
11. Cited in Jack Lindsay's *The Monster City: Defoe's London, 1688-1740* (London, 1978), p. 189.
12. *The Case Of The Royal African Company Of England* (London, 1730), p. 51.
13. *The Dispute between the Northern Colonies and the Sugar Islands...* (1731 broadside, in Goldsmiths Library, London Univ.); *A Letter To The Right Reverend The Lord Bishop Of London From An Inhabitant Of His Majesty's Leeward-Caribbean-Islands* (London, 1730), p. 14; *Some Matters of Fact relating to the Present State of the African Trade* (n.p., 1720), p. 1.
14. F. Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1533-1833* (OUP, 1977), p. 101.
15. James Houscoun, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
16. Daniel Defoe, *A Brief Account Of The Present State Of The African Trade* (London, 1715), p. 55.
17. Daniel Defoe, *Review* (edited by A.W. Second, Columbia Univ. Press, 1938), Vol. IX, p. 81.

18. *Report of the Debate on a Motion For the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the House of Commons on Monday and Tuesday, April 18th and 19th, 1791* (London, 1791), p. 47.
19. Cited by M. Cracon, J. Walvin, D. Wright, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London, 1976), p. 229; W. Stielgrave, *A New Account Of some Parts of Guinea, And the Slave Trade* (London, 1734), p. 160.
20. *The Athenian Mercury*, Vol. VIII, No 30 (1691). See C. A. Moore's *Backgrounds of English Literature 1760-1760* (Minneapolis, 1933), p. 135.
21. Edward Long's views are cited in O. Wall's *The Negro in English Literature* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Northwestern Univ., 1967), pp. 391-2. For Grainger and Boswell's views see Wylie Sypher's *Gumee's Captive Kings* (Chapel Hill, 1942), pp. 169ff; p. 69.
22. 'The African Slave Trade defended', in *The London Magazine* IX, 1740, pp. 423-4; cited in E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (4 Vols, Washington, 1930-35), Vol. 2, p. 470.
23. *The Letters of the Earl of Chesterfield to his Son* (edited by C. Strachey with notes by A. Calhoun, 3rd ed., London, 1932), p. 114.
24. T. Seymour, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
25. Tom R. Meier, *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia Univ., 1971), pp. 1, 18.
26. B. Dobson, 'The Theme of Patriotism in the Poetry of the Early Eighteenth Century', in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 35, 1949, p. 60.
27. George Cockings, *Arts, Manufactures, And Commerce: A Poem* (London, c. 1789); James Gaugh, *Britannia: A Poem with Historical Notes* (London, 1767); Edward Young, *The Merchant, An Ode On the British Trade and Navigation*, in *The Poetical Works of the Reverend Edward Young* (2 Vols., London, 1741), Vol. 2, p. 59f.
28. H.N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (New York, 1928), p. 56.
29. George Lillo, *Fatal Curiosity* (1737), Act 1, Scene 3, in *The Works Of the Late Mr George Lillo* (London, 1740), p. 19.
30. *The Four Kings of Canada: Being a Succinct Account of The Four Indian Princes lately arriv'd from North America* (London, 1710), p. 46.
31. R. Glover, *London: Or, The Progress of Commerce*, *op. cit.*, lines 209-12.
32. *Thoughts On Commerce And Liberty* (n.p., n.d.), p. 14. (British Library Class mark 1029.e.18/3). John Dyer in *The Fleece*, Bk 2, line 516 speaks of 'civilising trade'. Trueman in George Lillo's *The London Merchant*, Act 3, Scene 1, proclaims that the effects of commerce are to 'improve mankind by love and friendship, to tame the fierce, and polish the most savage'. Revd A.S. Cascon in his sermon on *The Antiquity and Honourableness Of the Practice of Merchandize*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16, declares that commerce 'renders a people polished in their manners... Cities owe their numbers and opulence to commerce; and cities are as well the nurseries of learning, and schools of politeness, as the centres of trade, and seats of magnificence'.
33. Cited by Tom R. Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
34. Young's *The Merchant*, *op. cit.*, Strain III, Stanza XXIV, p. 90. For more details on the way poets sang the praises of the merchant as the agent of progress and civilization see H.S. Hughes' 'The Middle-Class Reader and the English Novel', in *The Journal of English and German Philology*, Vol. 25, 1926, pp. 362ff; also G.H.R. Spate's 'The Muse of Mercantileism: Jago, Grainger, And Dyer', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century* (edited by R.F. Brinsenden, Canberra, 1968), pp. 119f.

35. Cited by Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
36. C.A. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
37. Cornelius Arnold's *Commerce* (London, 1752). The truth was that the European actively encouraged the African to fight against and enslave his fellow, by the bribery of tribal leaders – see Walter Rodney's *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 102-6, 113, etc.
38. Richard Glover, *London. Or, The Progress Of Commerce*, *op. cit.*, lines 293f.
39. To borrow James Sutherland's words. See Sutherland's *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry* (Oxford, 1948), p. 89.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
41. In *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 8 1738, p. 158.
42. Joseph La Valle, *The Negro Equall'd By Few Europeans* (Dublin, 1791), Vol. 1, pp. 81-2.
43. Details of the lives of Glover, Arnold and Grainger are to be found in *The Dictionary of National Biography*.
44. William Goldwin, *A Poetical Description Of Bristol* (London, 1712), p. 21.
45. C.A. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
46. *London Transformed. Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1978).
47. First published in May, 1752; 2nd edition in 1754 and 3rd edition in 1764. This work was highly esteemed by Dickens and Thackeray – see Austin Dobson, *William Hogarth* (London, 1907), p. 159.
48. R. Lovell, *Bristol. A Satire* (1794); in *The Works of The British Poets* (ed. Thomas Park, London, 1808), Vol. XLI, p. 22.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 21. Cf. Samuel Johnson's explanation of Richard Savage's rejection at Bristol – Savage's wit, culture and conversation were not valued in this 'place of commerce', the traders more conscious of 'solid gain' (*Lives of the Poets*, 2 vols., OUP reprint 1975, Vol. 2, p. 168).
50. Cited in Peter T. Marcy's *Eighteenth Century Views of Bristol and Bristolians* (Bristol, 1966), p. 13.
51. James Thomson, *Liberty* (1733/4), Part V, line 6, in *James Thomson Poetical Works* (ed. J.L. Robertson, Oxford University Press, 1971 reprint), p. 392.
52. *Ibid.*, Part IV, lines 1183-6.
53. John Brown, *Estimate*, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
54. Thomas Bedford, *The Origin Of our Grievances. A sermon* (London, 1770), p. 14.
55. M. Pouletsway, *The National and Private Advantages Of The African Trade Considered* (London, 1746), p. 4.
56. Daniel Defoe, *Reformation of Manners. A Satyr* (n.p. 1702), p. 17.
57. Thomas Bradshaw, *The Slave Trade Inconsistent With Reason And Religion. A Sermon* (London, 1788), p. 7.
58. *Patrimium. A Mock-Heroic Poem* (1765), in *The School for Satire* (London, 1802).
59. Hobbes' statement is cited by James Nason in his essay 'Dr Mandeville: "A Thinking Man"', in *The Varied Pattern: Studies in the 18th Century* (edited by P. Hughes and D. Williams, Toronto, 1971), p. 233.
60. Hans H. Andersen, *Daniel Defoe: A Study in the Conflict between Commercialism and Morality in the Early Eighteenth Century* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Univ. of Chicago, 1930), p. 107.
61. Charles Davenant, *An Essay Upon The Probable Methods Of making a People Gainers In The Balance of Trade* (London, 1699), pp. 154-5.

- 62 John Brown's *Estimate*, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
- 63 *A Letter To The Right Reverend The Lord Bishop Of London From An Inhabitant Of His Majesty's Leeward — Caribbee — Islands* (London, 1730).
- 64 *The Gentleman's Magazine* Vol. 2, 1732, p. 718 Benjamin Bissell in *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1923), p. 204, identifies the poet as John Winstanley
- 65 *A Discourse Addressed To Magistrates And Men in Authority Occasioned By the enormous Licence, and Irreligion of the Times* (London, 1736), in *A Miscellany Containing Several Tracts On Various Subjects* (London, 1732), p. 63.



'The Execution and Breaking on the Rack', anonymous engraving, 1793.

Chris Mansell

AMELIA EARHART FLIES OUT FROM LAE, N.G.

There are no gods
so you can please yourself
what rivers you rush up and down on
what roads you ignore
what patch or rift of landscape
you choose to fly over.

But remember this
you cannot choose whether
to stay or fly

the inevitable path
has you to fetch
and your wings will stick
in some tacked-down horizon
somewhere.

Fly out Amelia!

from my old town
Fly out! from its fecund green green green
from the red green red green brown
of the Flame Flower lianas.
Fly from the Poinsettia leaves
Fly from the bluer blue sea
where the earth falls off
where the water pushes
and pulls at your unconscious feet
Blue at the horizon.

The waves cannon down
on the open side
and lap the lee edge
of the bay
and coral fish
dip their snouts
into the rusted struts
of the ship Tanya Maru.

We watched it twenty years
slowly slipping off the edge
of the reef.

One morning it was gone
we hadn't noticed it go
it was suddenly an absence.

It's been more than forty years
the women wait
Amelia

GYPSY TAP

How to
understand you
in red.

Red lips, coat,
red jumper
shiny red red boots.

Smile.
You smile red
red red
red red.

Your arms
describe
a bright red
circle.

Your
fingernails pick
at the laces of
your dancing shoes.

Dance.
You dance
one red foot
and then another.

Dance.
You splash
one red thing
and then another.

Smile.
You smile
one red smile
and then another.

Bite.
You bite
one red peach
and then another.

Your
teeth crack hard
on its wrinkled
stone.

Your
fingernails split
on the knots
of your shoes.

THE COLLECTED UNCONSCIOUS

Take time off
 go
to Queensland
 where the deceived
 lose their baggage
 to the rich
 who put up signs
 for the defeated.

Go
 to Queensland
 it's here
you realize you're
 Australian
how different
 each from each
but us

 Now on the beach
Surfers Paradise
 notes the sky
helicopter pulls
 SEAWORLD 6 SHOWS 10 RIDES ALL ONE PRICE
across flat
like a bandaid

 it should be
a message
 to ring home.

Smell
 the suntans /
 estate agents

There are a lot
of Americans
 It's just like
 Home.

Someone has
Patti Smith on a record
player
they say it's not a r t
(there should be a message
it's entertaining
though.

At Purlingbrook Falls
there's a pond
352' down

looks like
National Geographic
has been here
with a helicopter
two-ways
helmets
ropes

for the neat shots
/dropped one
off the edge
of the cliff.

Blokes walking like goannas
come up the path
(200 years is the shortest route
to the lookout

behind them
women
thinking how to
push the children
over the edge
without looking / anyone watching.

The party at the pond
boils

up the rocks
curiosity abseils

who wants to know
about Queenslanders
celebrating

the myth of them
as sold
in Sydney

too gross

to contain

the dropped mouth
green and black
of the cliffs
the women and men
with beers

The Courier Mail
is The Smell

No-News-Day
(good day
for publicity

It's just like home.

(The noise is
either a goat

or the starter
of an EK Holden
or the bleat

of an agent
selling
the New Life
High Rise
Hope

But they're one
of us,
like family

at Christmas
you're one of them
and a heated toast rack
will never go astray
(the butt ends of your breakfast
you hide still
from your mother

What's a gun
in the family

(heavy metal

These people.
It's like being OS
they force you into being
an Australian

These Queenslanders
force
you into being
foreign

the rest
force you
into being
other than what you want
to be
and outlander
(ay?)

Who's the good girl then?

Another Friday Night

Stiletto heels cuban heels spanish heels old Adidas volley shoes blue Kung Fu slippers rope sandals luminescent pink socks and cowboy boots on the feet of Norm from Hughenden

Fishnet stockings pale ghost grey stockings drooping ragged lace hems of Woolworths half-slips black lace bras Maidenform bras Cross your heart and hope to die bras bikini tops black silk leotards smoothing bellies and shaved pubes

Floral print shirts and skirts members of the Jockette of the Month club v neck singlets pimply youths parading the few hairs on their chests trendy soldiers wearing tight pants and smart shirts with those little 'p's' (for P. Cardin) on them

Slit hem skirts revealing long white thighs and calves miniskirts tight shoes cutting into sore feet pairs of airline pilots looking for a screw fatso with a gut overhanging the belt of his dirty slacks two sizes too big for him

Black shoes tan shoes ragged running shoes two tone jazzman's shoes with pointed toes and seethrough soles

Shaved legs thin legs dimpled fat legs grafted onto dimpled overweight buttocks or slim little cheeks like unripe pears

Necklines plunging down between great wallowing hummocks of flesh that flop about like balloons full of water or to flat pieces of skin between discreet size 10 or 12 breasts covered in fuzz hidden nipples fringed with toupees of thick black hairs

Hair fluffed this way or that straight up like that of the dingo boy from *Mad Max 2* ragged and torn by \$60 clippings a heavy looking guy (who can lay you out and break your teeth with one punch) mixing drinks with the hair at the base of his neck a rhapsody in electric blue girls with eyelids like the wingcases of rare insects people waving glasses and sipping as they talk hands reaching through the crowd to caress a familiar bottom or goose a stranger padded breasts cosmetic crotches smokers blowing clouds in the faces of lesser beings who dare not complain about the sting in their eyes people lined up outside the door

trying to get in girls sitting in boys' laps boys bending to kiss girls feet stroking feet

And the dance floor a little square of parquetry roofed by flashing lights adjoining a tiny carpeted stage on which a large thighed woman (who is getting too old for it) will occasionally shake herself about smile at the audience and chat to the DJ the crowd on the dance floor grows and dwindles locked into the groove their feet moving left then right bending one knee then the other twisting the heel forwards on the toe towards the toe of the other foot left then right, left then right left then right left then right locked into that groove in the semidarkness where the bodies are crushed in a hot humid sweat stepping on each other's toes dodging the butt of their neighbour's sophisticated Craven A a drunk staggering and falling and being assisted to a seat boys standing on the dance floor not knowing what to do with their hands locked in the groove a girl in white moccasins dressed like a pixie joyously flinging herself about with such abandon that her partner can't keep up some deserters from the Kiss Army somebody in neon pink pants propelling his two tone shoes faster and faster while a small circle of onlookers shake their heads in disbelief and say things like 'Jesus, look at that' while up at the bar they're six deep trying to get pissed on Foures and Cairns Draught and rough red and tequila and rumbos and the sweat is pouring off everybody because at 37 degrees the air conditioning is a joke and they're all locked in that groove that leftrightleft with the feet that limp wristed chacha with the hands that cogarooga with the neck

And though they will all swear at Monday morning tea that they had a real rage at the Terrace on Friday night, mate, they're all dancing locked in that groove left right left leftrightleft huggahugga with the dancer doing this terrible grind routine holding her hands out to the boys with a Colgate smile frozen on her face and this kid is looking cockeyed (cause he is pissed) at the lump between her legs and thinking hamm, she's gotta be a slut and she's saying take me, take me to the Casbah and use me as you like while he's got his other eye on this girl with these nipples sticking through her dress like jam jar tops (I mean, she must have had to rub them to get them to stick up like that so she's gotta be asking for a couple inches (ok Oh God Oh Jesus lookitemins!)) and they're all locked into that groove and dancing on the carpets and leaping in the air and landing on their arses

And on their faces they're all wearing the same look while they avoid the eyes of the person they are 'dancing' with

And that look is utter pissed-off boredom

Or maybe they're watching the comedy relief for the night, the small contingent of gayboys and gaygirls in studded leather gear and frills and jumpsuits and lace just like those Spandau Ballet Johnnies on TV and in the magazines they all subscribe to. I mean *darling* they're standing there looking oh so demure in their clothes with their hair, I mean, their hair is ab-so-lute-ly the *latest* thing coz they stopped in at work this afternoon and had one of the other boys and girls touch it up with a bit of a tint on the fringe and a twist of the kiss curls just so. They're standing there looking like it is *all* just so boring I mean just so la-de-da like they're completely bored out of their heads and this place is really the pits but it is *after all* the only game in town. Their leader is there in his ladies boutique clothes with a wide glittery belt and three earrings in each ear and a necklace of pig tusks around his neck and his moustache neatly trimmed and his plucked eyebrows and his diet-slimmed body. They're standing there like it is just so boring — all these crass fans of thud rock so crushed on the floor that they can barely twitch their arses to the World's Greatest Rock Band AC/DC (which claim must be true because it is what their ads say) They're standing in a group and it's all-can you lend me a cigarette, darling? your place or mine? not this week coz the doc sez I've still got the pox-with their ciggies in one hand and their drinks in the other.

But that bunch who think themselves just soooo cool and soooo de mode and soooo a la carte, when they wake up (Oh Jesus what time is it honey?) on Monday morning they will have to slip into a pair of cotton-tails/jocks and go to work as hairdressers and checkout punchers. Hairdressers and checkout punchers who think they are the sex object of the hour Friday and Saturday nights while all these poor lost proles wander around trying to get a dance and a fuck, but instead just get drunk and stagger out to vomit into the river and make a mess of their clothes.

What a joke

Mark Macleod

SHOW AND TELL

when me mum and dad
go off the club
i turn all the lights out
but not me bedroom
and me boyfriend rings up
and he says i got the wagon
and we just cruise
round talken looken
for a party and we get back
half past eleven
and the lights on
and i think God
and me dad opens the door on us
and he says you cradle
snatcher ya bloody ro
man polanski and me boyfriend hits him
and he falls on the floor
and there's blood
and i'm cryen
and me mum goes in the kitchen
cryen and me dad flat
on his back holds up
this ten dollar note
and says okay
tell us
how much
we owe ya for babysitten

'Antipodean eyes': ways of seeing in Shirley Hazzard's *The Transit of Venus*

Early in *The Transit of Venus*, Caro(line) Bell, a young Australian registers her response to an English summer. There is about it, she feels, 'an abundance that overwhelmed'. By contrast, '«Australian summer is a scorching, without a leaf to spare. Out there, the force is in the lack, in the scarcity and distance.»' They are opposites, each has its 'force' but it is not, in Caro's mind, a question of inferiority. In the same scene, because of Caro's influence, Ted Tice, a young Englishman in love with her, records a change in his way of looking at his place. '«It used to be, in England, that you were never far from the countryside. Now you are always near a town.»' Tice 'had begun to look', we are told, 'with antipodean eyes' (p.26).

Sefton Thrale, an old, eminent English scientist, at whose home Tice and Caro are guests, can make no such accommodations. To him, any deviation from an ideal English model 'required apologies': 'Australia required apologies, and was almost a subject for ribaldry' (p.11). He is representative of what Shirley Hazzard, elsewhere, calls the 'other, authoritative world'.¹ Whereas the sisters Caro and Grace Bell, growing up in Australia in the 1930s and '40s, are faced with the proposition that to be Australian was to be on the 'losing side': it was 'unnatural' of the Australian poet Kendall, whose poetry was fit for Elocution Class but not English poetry, to sing of spring in September. 'What was natural was hedgerows, hawthorn, skylarks, the chaffinch on the orchard bough. You had never seen these but believe in them with perfect faith ... Literature had not simply made these things true. It has placed Australia in perpetual, flagrant violation of reality' (p.31). Beside events like the Coronation, which was all 'of a piece with the Black Prince and the Wars of the Roses' (p.52), Australian history was a 'shrivelled chronicle ... swiftly passed over by teachers impatient to return to the service at the

Abbey' (p.32). The upshot of the education and upbringing exacted on Caro and Grace in Australia is that reality, the true and adult life, was to be associated with the metropolitan centre.

There was nothing mythic at Sydney: momentous objects, beings, and events all occurred abroad or in the elsewhere of books. Sydney could never take for granted, as did the very meanest town in Europe, that a poet might be born there or a great painter walk beneath its windows. The likelihood did not arise, they did not feel they had deserved it. (p.37)

In terms of the controlling European ethos, to be antipodean is to be inferior; it is to know that you are unimportant. But this is also Caro's knowledge as a woman and Tice's as a 'poor boy'. In her relationship with Paul Ivory, given the assumptions of privilege and masculinity upon which he operates, Caro is expected to know that she 'would be instructed, not questioned: ... Paul, not Caro, would interpret the meaning in their respective lots' (p.133). As a linguist with a government department, one of the first women to sit for (and pass) the entrance examination, she would, Christian confidently announces, with no hint of irony and a good deal of relish, be exploited. It was 'assumed' that, as a part of her duties, 'she would, from a housewifely instinct in fact minimal in her, set the room to rights' (p.183). It was, similarly, taken for granted that the men in the office would 'do nothing that lowers their self-esteem' (p.192), while the women would make tea, serve lunches, and generally tidy up dishes and egos. She felt herself outside or in opposition to the dominant ethos which was English, hierarchically ordered and male.

This, also, catches something of Tice's sense of reality. Having been conducted around the Thrales' stately home by Mrs Thrale, he wonders if, eventually, 'he would learn this too — to speak confidently and leave a room'. He felt, in this place, like an 'upper servant. He was young and poor and had the highest references — like a governess in an old story, who marries into a noble family' (p.6). But society, too, places him. After Paul Ivory has 'murdered' Victor Locker it is Tice, who saw what happened, whom the Police suspect, not Paul. Paul explains how 'the police fixed on the wrong chap ... their eyes lit on the one that looked and spoke the part, and had nothing but his innocence to back him' (p.309).

What these groups share — the post-colonial, women, the poor — is the knowledge that nothing in their past or present lives allows them to make comfortable assumptions about existence. Their knowledge is that they have no power and that they can have no expectations about it.

They find themselves in opposition to the institutionalized structures of western society — family, school, bureaucracy, government — which are built on particular notions of power, authority and progress, implicit in which is a reading of history, and which are directed towards maintaining the status quo of an economic and cultural élite. Such a recognition may, on the one hand, be debilitating, leading to various forms of victimization. In the novel we see such responses as Dora's disavowal of her self and her place; the moral bankruptcy of the Lockers, the subservience of Grace or Tice's mother; or, Mr Tice's anger. On the other hand, it may have in it a potential for strength. Tice breaks the circle of exploitation, as Caro does, with his intellectual, passionnal and moral life. This is a refusal to be a victim, despite the knowledge, 'that those who do not see themselves as victims accept the greater stress' (p.38). They are, the novel says, 'antipodean'; each understands that, ultimately, 'every lie must be redeemed'.

Literally, an Antipodean is on the opposite side of the world; is an Australasian. But, in the logic of the novel, it is to hold opposite views to the prevailing views, it is to be the opposite of a person or thing, where 'European' provides the norm. It is to be outside the established repositories of power and authority; it is, then, not the geography which is important, but the ideas an individual holds. The 'antipodean', it is suggested, knows, as Tice knows, that he is different to the 'ruling classes' (p.27); it is to work, as Adam Vail does, outside government and on 'behalf of others' (p.182); it is to dare to be human in a 'mass society'.

The 'antipodean' is, in the sense in which the terms are used by Europeans, historyless and placeless. As a woman and as an Australian Caro knows this. The history that she knows of is English, masculine and full of grand heroic gestures but it doesn't fit in with her experience. Instead of a history enshrined in cenotaphs and 'monuments to wars sweetest symbols — the soldier, bronze rifle rested, supporting his decorously felled comrade, the marshal cleanly victorious on his flawless mare' (p.36), she knows another and opposite version. In her experience, there is an 'Unofficial' history, to be found on street corners. Here 'History' was enshrined in the legless, the blind, the gassed remnants of war; living monuments — a century's private collection to unnerve a gloss of History — whose 'excruciating songs', absurd and meaningless, echo through the novel providing a subtext to notions of success and progress through war. For Caro, the greatest heroism is in living, refusing 'the safe side of the line' if the commitment to life calls for the extreme.

The Antipodean is also placeless, beyond nation, if by that is meant a narrow nationalism. Speaking of the modern age, Shirley Hazzard draws

attention to 'an unprecedented loss of geographic and, to some extent, national and even social, sense of belonging', and in the novel this is figured, to mention just two instances, by Sefton Thrale's feelings of disorientation, and Dora's incessant wandering around the globe, but the 'antipodeans' do not need the certain certainties of physical place. Unlike Dora, who seeks out English enclaves wherever she goes — in the Algarve she stayed at 'the Chisholm and might have been at Hammersmith' (p.161) — Caro carries December in her nostrils 'for a lifetime' (p.57). She devotes herself to living, wherever she is. This is no simple matter, but from the outset Caro was prepared to take her own soundings on reality: she is prepared to go 'inland', wonders 'about the inside and the back' of ordinary life. Paul sees in her 'some other, reckless nationality'. She is 'exotic', different.

Professor Thrale, for 'politics and gain' — a superficial nationalism — fabricates data in order to ensure a telescope is sited in England. Tice knows that the better sites are in the south of Europe and opposes his colleague and countryman, aware that the English press will accuse him of disloyalty. His commitment, however, is to truth. Similarly, Adam Vail, while, on the one hand, prepared to denounce 'the connivance and covert support of the United States Government' (p.261) in Latin America, is, on the other hand, profoundly afraid that his nation 'may turn out to be a phenomenon, rather than a civilization' (p.205). His 'fear' drives his criticism; he wants reform. Hansi, the diplomat, also recognizes the need for reform, but his intention, like 'our modern altruists, ... is to wrest as much money from [his] employers as possible, turn up [his] hi-fi, indulge [his] appetites and tastes, and sleep long and sound each night'. This may be 'shit', as Josie remarks, but it has its logic. As Adam says, '«Those who continually criticise the achievement of others must achieve something of their own or become ridiculous»' (p.212). One of the lines of contact of this exchange is with Paul's condemnation of England: he loathes its 'censoriousness, the reluctance to try anything else. The going through to the bitter end with all the wrong things.' '«A lot of people in England pass their time collecting negative evidence on almost any theme. Old Thrale is archetypal»' (p.91). But Paul, too, is prepared to 'become ridiculous'. He has neither the 'concentration' nor the 'endurance' of 'Antipodeans', whose devotion is to the world, and who are at home in justice, truth.

The tension between 'antipodean' and 'authoritative' ways of seeing is present from the opening pages of the novel, from that moment when Tice meets Caro and Grace at the Thrales' dinner table, of which the

Professor was so clearly the head. But two incidents at the table differentiate perspectives and subvert Thrale's authority. The first of these occurs after he has proclaimed his godson's bravery in marrying into the aristocracy: 'It's a brave man these days who'll marry the daughter of a lord. With all you radicals around.' The remark is directed at Tice and Caro since, in Thrale's mind, 'Grace's way of quietly stacking plates exonerated her'. Yet, it is Grace who looks up and suggests that 'Perhaps he loves her'. To which Thrale replies, 'Perfectly right. Young people should follow their fancy. Why not?' (p.15). Grace's 'love' is Thrale's 'fancy', a whim, and, although both are proved wide of the mark, it is the responses that we are drawn to: the one ideal, naïve, open; the other reductive, condescending, cynical.

Following this exchange, Tice, 'honouring the faith, not the failure' (p.16) tells the 'noble' story of the French astronomer Guillaume Legendil who, having been delayed in his attempt to observe the transit of Venus in 1761, waited in the East for the 1769 transit, only to be thwarted by bad weather. To Sefton Thrale, however, the expedition was a 'failure' (p.16). This signals a fundamental difference: Thrale wants tangible evidence of success, whereas Tice draws attention to the human endeavour, 'the faith'.

It is for similar reasons that Thrale cannot take 'Tice's future ascendancy ... on faith'; he must know 'whether he would win or fail' (p.12). He is, reflects the Professor, 'a poor boy from a grimy town, a clever boy who got himself — the phrase implying contrivance... — to a great university and made his impression there'. With a north-country accent, a deformed eye, a preference for old-fashioned cable-stitch cardigans and a name like Ted Tice, he could offer Thrale no picture of certainty (p.12).⁵ Paul Ivory, however, was a presence to be gambled on; he 'had grown into a tall young [man] by attending the right schools, singing the right hymns and making the right turns'. He would be a 'star' in any firmament. He was 'modern'⁶ but he was also someone to be certain about, he offered a sense of continuity with the past.

Sefton Thrale's inclination is to define existence, but the subtext of the novel is that there can be no adequate definitions — 'calculations about Venus', for example, are invariably wrong (p.15) — and that the urge to define stems from a need to conquer, to control or possess, the ultimate end of which is to simplify, to smooth, the contours of existence.⁷ The one mind wanting to reduce, to classify and compose into identifiable and manageable forms, the other mind accepting complexity, seeking to make sense of existence, not achieve mastery over it.

An element in the Professor's devotion to Paul is due to the fact that his own existence has become problematic: not only has his assistant defied the gravity of academic preferment, but also his daughter is to marry an Australian. To Sefton, whose 'best self ... like his best work' (p.13), derived from before the First World War, the future was merely 'something to talk about, one foot safely on the fender'. It was something to theorise about, leaving the living to others.

'Your generation will be the one to feel it. Some form of social structure existed until now. Say what you like about it. Now we're at the end of all that. You'll be the ones to bear the brunt.'

With rapid satisfaction he pointed out, to Ted and the girls, their almost culpable bad luck. In the same way, arrivals at a rainy resort will be told, 'We've had fine weather until today.'

'There has been global order of a kind. Say what you like.'

That of course they could not do. (p.10)

This is the old academic indulging a theory, teaching the younger generation a lesson while, at the same time, separating himself from accountability: 'You'll be the ones to bear the brunt.' But, we notice, also, a simplifying tendency in his language. The social fragmentation becomes analogous to a change in the weather. The future is 'their almost culpable bad luck'. Like Hansi the diplomat, whose only mental exertion is spent on deciphering word puzzles, Thrall has abdicated his right to make sense. The same forces are at work in Paul Ivory. Speaking of their meeting, Caro says it was 'destiny', whereas Paul calls it 'luck'. Luck, destiny: this is more than a semantic difference; it has to do with the way one perceives and responds to existence. To see it as ruled by luck, is to assume that meaning is illusory; it removes any obligation to be accountable for existence. Such a view of existence colours Paul's writing. In contrast to his father, who took no account of literary fashion,⁴ Paul sought to give the public what he thought they wanted (p.77). Making sense is something he resorts to when 'other methods flagged' (p.90): he is fascinated by words but not by meaning.

The eloquence with which Caro, Tice and, later, Grace converse does not extend to Thrall, Christian, Dora, or, wholly, to Paul,⁵ all of whom, in the fabric of the novel, are associated by linguistic echoes in what amounts to a complicity to defraud language, to obstruct sense and humane reason, and to devalue culture and existence. Behind the whole, however, the very fluid in which it floats, is the superb eloquence of the narrative giving the novel its tone and, as Shirley Hazard says of style, providing the novel with its context, endorsing fact and value. It is the

Thrales, the Hansis and their various manifestations among a 'petrified' intelligentsia (p.206) and an impotent bureaucracy, the text insistently reminds us, who have talked civilization into two world wars and to the verge of nuclear war.⁸ Existence is meaningless for them. Their life is a continual disavowal of their humanity. Thrale, for example,

exonerated completely the inventors of deadly weapons: 'We merely interpret the choices of mankind.' And when Caro objected — 'Aren't scientists also men, then? At the very least, responsible as their fellows?' — he had closed the discussion with his scarcely patient smile, as if to assure a child that it would understand, or not care, when it was older. (p.57)

Sefton Thrale 'had long since become the views he had never contested' (p.85).

In the text, Thrale's comments on scientific responsibility are contiguous with Tice's recollections of his response to the devastation of Hiroshima. In the face of what he saw

the events he already called his life were growing inconsiderable before he had practised making them important. This derived from a sense not of proportion but of profound chaos, a welter in which his own lucky little order appeared miraculous but inconsequential; and from a revelation, nearly religious, that the colossal scale of evil could only be matched or countered by some solitary flicker of intense and private humanity. (p.53)

He began to see things differently: it was from this time that Tice's 'fate became equivocal, and he ceased to make quite clear if he would win or fail'. This was the end, for Tice, almost before they had begun, of any certain certainties. To his guide, the 'incinerat[ion]' of Hiroshima was a victory and a deterrent, making war 'unthinkable': 'In that way it has been salutary.' The background to the novel, a collage of wars, battles and violent disruptions, refutes Girling's complacency. A footnote to the text might be Robert Jay Lifton's *Death in Life: The Survivors of Hiroshima*:

After Hiroshima we can envisage no war-linked chivalry, certainly no glory. Indeed, we can see no relationship — not even a distinction — between victimizer and victim — only the sharing in species annihilation...⁹

Stunned by what he sees, Tice's feelings of mercy are seen by Girling as a 'disadvantage'; he is as disconcerting to his Captain as he is to be disturbing to Thrale (p.54). He is warned not to 'make a goat' of himself. 'Goat signifying anything unmanly, or humane,' says the narrator, carefully.

This is one of those moments in the novel when the background is brought into the foreground and a crucial event in the century's chaos is laid out, when fiction meets fact¹¹ and the reader, in a sense simultaneously with Tice, grapples again with the implications of Hiroshima. For we contemplate both its human consequences and its significance as an historic event: in the logic of the novel it is to be seen in the context of the degradations of the First World War; as the result of certain human choices; and as a measure of technological progress, to be absurdly linked to the 'calculated uselessness' of the trinkets with which the Americans re-colonised Australia in the 1940s — nibbles pens, celluloid pencil sharpeners, pencils with lights (p.47) — and to lunar space flights (p.245).¹² It may seem futile to try to oppose action which seems to be sanctioned by those in power and yet both the rise of Hitler and the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam depended, at every stage, upon human support, upon choices.

At twenty, then, Tice begins to understand that he is different but, in his difference, he is linked to others who are prepared, out of principle, or a sense of destiny, to live according to an 'intense and private humanity' (p.53). It is 'the uncommon man who gets everyone's goats' (p.142), warns Valda, and Ramon Treggar further characterises the type as one 'who stands alone' (p.249). This, then, is the Antipodean; someone capable of a 'conscious act of independent humanity'.

Tertia Drage and Christian are disconcerted by the quality of purpose they discern in Caro; her 'fine solemnity' (p.144). When he first sees Caro and Grace together, Christian marvels at their composure: 'They seemed scarcely conscious of being Australians in a furnished flat' (p.21), while Tertia would have liked to bring 'their disadvantage ... home to them' (p.66). And yet Christian, in a thought as instructive about himself as Caro, notices that she 'moved with consequence as if existence were not trivial'.¹³ In reply to his question about their presence in London, 'do you then ... mean to try out life here, and return — was it — to Sydney?' — a kind of aimless dabbling in life — Caro replies laughing: 'Life doesn't work that ways' (p.22). For Caro, everything had 'the threat and promise of meaning' (p.17), which is to be compared with Dora's incessant travel and bickering; with Christian, whose 'chances in life seemed bound up with the colour of girls' dresses, the streaks of curtain at windows' and other omens which he interpreted as good or bad luck (p.23); or with Paul Ivory, the opportunist, whose whole manner 'suggested technique' (p.71).

The girls are strange, different. The narrator underlines Christian's bemused response to them. He is so disoriented that he wonders, in a

usage which subverts the traditional conception of the colonial as 'cast-away', if he is 'not the one in need of rescue' (p.22).

These women provided something new to Christian — a clear perception unmingled with suspiciousness. Their distinction was not only their beauty and their way with one another, their crying need of a rescue for which they made no appeal whatever; but a high humorous candour for which — he could frame it no other way — they would be willing to sacrifice. (p.23)

There was nothing in Christian's background to have prepared him for these women so that, when Caro 'proved too much for him' (like some contemplated expensive acquisition, she was 'beyond his means'), 'he almost disliked her' (p.24). This, of course, no less than Sefton's rejection of Tice for Paul, in the face of the disorientation he feels, is an attempt to stabilize his world. Caro's difference becomes abhorrent. 'Grace's beauty', on the other hand, her 'tame and tractable' nature (p.195), 'was a vindication' (p.20) of his judgement, his status and his masculine dominion: it was a return to the known. To Christian, women were either to be charmed, if they were sweet, fragile and submissive; or, if they did not conform to this stereotype, they were to be loathed or disregarded. In this way he could clearly define — could 'classify' — his relationship with them.¹⁴

Paul Ivory draws from a similar well in his dealings with women. One of his tactics was to 'creat[e] an exchange' in which he made women 'talk in such a way, in such a voice, with the double meanings that diminished meaning, stretching the tension-wire between man and woman to a taut, purposeless antagonism' (p.89). As the metaphor of conflict suggests, Paul's seduction of Caro is a conquest. He will 'punish' her for 'being remarkable'; wants to 'wound' her, to 'violate [her] pride or her integrity' (p.96); and, having got the 'upper hand', he will 'await her submission' (p.135). With an 'instinct for the fluctuations of resistance' (p.134), he waits his opportunity; knows it will come, like a fall in the stockmarket or a cross-bat shot in cricket.

He was calm, with controlled desire and with the curiosity that is itself an act of desire. As yet he and she had merely guessed at each other's essence, and her show of self-sufficiency had given her some small degree of power over him — power that could only be reversed by an act of possession. (p.98)

This has nothing to do with patience; it is sordid with technique and ego.¹⁵

This passage sets the tone of the encounter. To Caro the moment was 'a crisis' in which, 'if he chose, [Paul] might feel her change forever'; to

Paul it was a cheap thrill. The one 'confiding [her] strength', the other taking possession; the difference between a view of existence as capable of meaning and nihilism, which denies meaning.¹⁶ On entering the pub to which he takes Caro, and which until recently he had frequented with his homosexual lover, he reads a notice to Caro: 'The Management is not responsible for loss of valuables.' We take the meaning. 'She will not be so very different in the event, he supposed — with a mental shrug or swagger...'¹⁶

Love, says Caro, has become her 'greatest or sole distinction' (p.152). It was, to borrow some lines from another of Shirley Hazzard's women, 'the only state in which one could consider oneself normal: which engaged all one's capacities, rather than those developed by necessity — or shipwreck'. Paul, however, discards Caro when he feels his love for her upsetting the stability of his world and giving her 'stature: she was either unique or an inaugurator. Paul resented the historic position she had established for herself in the momentum of his life, and because of it would have liked to see her broken' (p.155).¹⁷ He could bear some 'preliminary uncertainty ... if the outcome was assured' (p.98) but Caro left him with 'the everlasting, irritating, and alluring impression that she addressed herself to an objective beyond the small egoistic drama of their own desires'. It is just this mysterious strength which Adam Vail values: 'He thought most men would hardly dare to touch her, or only with anger, because she would not pretend anything was casual' (p.186). And Tice's attachment to Caro was an

intensification of his strongest qualities, if not of his strengths: not a youthful adventure, fresh and tentative, but a gauge of all effort, joy, and suffering ... The possibility that he might never, in a lifetime, arouse her love in return was a discovery touching all existence. (p.57)

Paul's marriage to Tertia, by contrast, was merely an 'interesting collusion' based on a mutual agreement to deceive 'one another ... [and] a larger public' (p.133).¹⁸ While Christian, witless and arrogant, wonders — in the manner in which someone with heartburn may contemplate a second helping of a rich dessert — why 'one could not have a little true love without lifelong consequences' (p.240).

Tice, Caro and Adam refuse to trivialize existence in this way. For, if Caro has learnt that, in the scheme of things, human existence is inconsequential she knows also that existence achieves its meaning (or lack of meaning) from human choices and actions. Such a sense of purpose is implicit in the title and is endorsed by the narrator in the telling. For Shirley Hazzard's omniscience is inseparable from the matter

of the novel, tracing carefully Caro's progress towards inner vision, endorsing those who affirm the essential worth of human beings, and consolidating this notion of complex design in existence.

There are others in the novel like Paul, for whom existence is a game or a felony to be got away with: you won or you lost. 'If you can reach fifty without a catastrophe, you've won. You've got away with it. Perhaps even now I've had more good life than they can take from me' (p.100). When Cordelia refuses to accept her 'unbearable and commendable prerogative' as a woman which was to bring 'matters to a head' (p.238) — that romantic role designated by books and films — Christian blames 'the world' for having 'once more proved unworthy of [him]' (p.241).¹⁰ 'Life', or the undefined 'they' who are in league with it, is to be beaten, blamed, or tricked. This is to dehumanize and trivialize existence; it is to turn it into a battle for supremacy or a game. In the world of the novel these positions are taken by those who subscribe to an 'authoritative' version of existence that is constructed on structures of power behind which the individual can hide but which, the novel exposes, no less than war, take a heavy toll of humanity.

At the end of his life, bearing the lie of his existence, Paul, the elegant 'modern', looks like 'a suspect or fugitive' (p.321).

He had reached fifty, but had not got away with it. She said, 'There is the terrible ignorance, looking back. Not knowing this was in store.'

Paul said, 'The rage — at fate, at God. Not merely being helpless, but in someone's — something's — power ... I've always detested any sense of power over me.' (p.288)

The passage echoes Paul's earlier plan for beating life (p.100) in which, in his arrogance, he believed his opportunism would carry him through. It is Tice, however, who knows that life doesn't 'have to be credible or fair' (p.102); who knows that it is one's duty, in faith and humility, to make sense of existence, not to strip it of meaning. In the end Caro sees that Paul could so 'reduce' their relationship that it became 'the play within the play', a device as a writer for which he 'had a taste', just as Christian's affair with Cordelia, 'in the synopsis of remembrance', becomes a long story to be cut short. It is only at the fag-end of his life that Paul recognizes that 'God's sense of humour might extend to [him] too' (p.309). He had always believed in God but he had reduced God to a kind of benevolent croupier who made sure he always had a supply of chips. Caro, too, was 'a believer in her own way', we are told, 'which was not his' (p.76). Being born outside the traditional repositories of power, she knows, as Tice knows, that she can make no assumptions about the

benign or malign influence of God. Tice calls witnesses on occasions but the prerogative is to make sense of the given. Tice's 'sovereign power', to pick up one of the motif phrases of the novel, lies in his 'self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control'; those lines extracted from their context in Tennyson's 'Oenone' and used as a punishment in school, to be written 'one hundred times' (p.81).¹⁰ By turning them into a punishment, Pallas' wisdom — 'because right is right, to follow right/ Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence' — is transformed into a bludgeon for social Law, not a plea for personal action in the light of eternal law. Just as Pallas' judgement is meant to hold for 'Oenone', so it is for *The Transit of Venus*. But, in both works, there are conflicting versions of 'sovereign power'.¹¹ For, if Dora stands for a different moral choice to Tice — her 'sovereign power' lay 'in her power to accuse, to judge, to cause pain' (p.38) — Rex Ivory is his moral equal. Characterised by his 'lode of authenticity' (p.94), Rex is honoured by the text for his 'old-fashioned virtues': self-sacrifice, self-effacement, charity, civility. He is prepared to be different and to stand alone; and, because he has a faith in the possibility of significant human action, he refuses to accept that existence is fortuitous, based on luck.

He is an 'antipodean' and has a view of existence based on truth and the will for truth, in contrast to those who refuse to care, refuse to take responsibility for their actions and who cheapen and demean their existence.

What distinguishes the 'antipodeans' in the novel is that they accept responsibility for their existence. Tice explains this in a letter to Caro: 'What an atrocious, sustained effort is required, I find, to learn or do anything thoroughly — especially if it's what you love ... To do is difficult enough. To be, more difficult still' (p.116). To do and to be; this is to summon 'real courage for a heavy risk' (p.92): 'What we are being, not what we are to be' (p.327), intones the wise voice behind the text. But, in the Thrake men, Tertia, Paul, Cartledge and the bureaucrats the 'unfashionable ideals' by which the 'antipodeans' are linked have gone to seed. Their selfishness, impassivity and insensitivity leads, with a sense of inevitability, to murder, public lies, humiliation and sycophancy. They figure a society in decay. With a terrible complacency — a kind of willing impotence — Paul Ivory speaks of a universal 'lack of surprises' that began, he surmises, with 'the First World War. Why should you or I, for instance, be surprised by anything by now' (p.151).

There is a different perspective which sees the human as neither victim nor victimizer, but as the survivor of various shipwrecks, personal, national, and universal, small and monumental; which sees us all in the

sea of existence together. Such a view does not deny that society has suffered a terrible convulsion but it denies the nihilism which seems for many the automatic response to the condition. Tice acknowledges the centrality of 'hope' to his life, Caro holds the 'crude belief — that there could be heroism, excellence' (p.10) and there is, about several of the characters in the novel, a 'dated nobility', which, as Paul says, he had 'forgotten ... was supposed to exist' (p.314). He is speaking of his father who shares with a minority of characters the knowledge that an 'absence of self-delusion ... is liberty' (p.219). In the optics of the novel, he sees with 'amipodean eyes' and is free to act.

NOTES

1. Shirley Hazard, *The Transit of Venus* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1981), p.26. Hereafter all references to the novel will be included in brackets in the text.
2. 'Woollahra Road', *Australian Writing Today*, ed. Charles Higham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p.247.
3. Here, as in the reflection on Tice's education, Thrane tries to reduce Tice's achievement. He is trying to remove the threat he feels in Tice: 'Sefton Thrane recalled a paper, like a twinge of his illness, on which Ted Tice's precocious achievement was set out against all odds' (p.10). By contrast, Tice's magnanimity is reflected, even at this early stage in the novel, in his thoughts on Legendil.
4. Paul Ivory 'was the first Englishman they knew to dress, as everyone dressed later, in a dark-blue jersey like a fisherman's, and to wear light cotton trousers and canvas shoes' (p.68).
5. See p.11, and a later conversation between Paul and Caro in a cemetery: Caro says, 'The dead in cemeteries give the impression of having all died normally and peacefully.' She knows life (or death) is not that neat. 'Do you think that's why they excluded suicides from consecrated ground, to maintain the fiction?' (p.76).
6. See pp. 32, 321.
7. Grace realises that her 'exchanges' with Angus Dance were her 'first conversations. With Christian there was the office, there were the three boys, there were the patterns and crises of domestic days' (p.270). Christian's speech is pompous, helligrent, besotted with jargon, and, like his father and Doer, he uses language as a weapon to get his own way. Sefton draws on 'all the benign and practised public tricks' of using language.
8. See, Ms Hazard's comments on the United Nations in *Defeat of an Ideal*, and in newspaper articles in *TLS* (4 May 1973), p.501, and *New Republic* (19 January 1969), pp.17-20. The only real consternation felt by the English government officials, to whom the delegation from South America pleaded the case for eight of their countrymen who were to be executed, occurs when the luncheon arrangements become confused.

9. Cited by A. Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p.264.
10. See, also, e.g. discussion of the transits of Venus, using the telescope, and the journalists discussing Vietnam.
11. See, also, Alvarez, *The Savage God*: as Alvarez says, the Bomb is 'a kind of lunatic spin-off of the technological advances of the century which, in the process of creating the wherewithal to make life easier than before, has perfected ... instruments to destroy life completely' (p.263).
12. Tertlia, about whom nothing seemed 'to have been humanly touched', senses in 'Caro's most commonplace movements rehearsals for life and death'.
13. See, p.24.
14. Dora's every action was 'worded with self'; it was a 'darkness' from which Caro had to emerge (p.60).
15. Paul is a more emotionally benumbed Clem from Shirley Hazard's story 'The Picnic', who, after an eight-year affair, considers it a displacement, not just of his habits — though that, too — but of his intelligence.
16. In a similar situation with Cordelia Ware, Christian muses: 'It would be unusual if she turned out to be — girls these days were not. At least, not by the time one met up with them' (p.254).
17. He had taken up with her, he later explains, out of 'revenge' on Tice.
18. Tertlia's world is organized around the same principles of thought and action as the patriarchal world which emerges through Paul, Christian, and the bureaucrats. She is identified with the great house which carries with it both the traditional symbology of male protection and privilege and the changed symbolism effected in the Gothic novel in which it is 'an image of male power in its sinister aspect, threatening and oppressive'. (Eva Figgis, *Sex and Subterfuge: Women Novelists to 1830* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.74. I am grateful to Ms Dorothy Jones for directing me to this reference.) Tertlia, we are told, 'handled objects or pushed doors with primitive abruptness, seeing no reason to indulge an uncompliant world'.
19. See, p.49: 'Dora can always die, so she said. I CAN ALWAYS DIE ... Or, she could disappear.' Adam's concern was that, like her mother, Josie would also 'take up death as her lethal instrument'. Even when young she had 'the inanition that announces self-engrossment. She was already setting up an apparatus of blame...' (p.208). Caro felt her inculcating a 'moral obligation to find the world abominable' (p.167).
20. A. Dwight Culler refers to this passage as one 'which generations of schoolboys will have to memorize'. *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1977), p.78.
21. As Tice says in another context but picking up the novel's concern with ways of seeing: 'Even through a telescope, some people see what they choose to see, just as they do with the unassisted eye' (p.293).

The Order of Things at Home

INTRODUCTION

This paper documents the findings of a study of the influences of some cultural, social and architectural factors upon the meaning and use of domestic space. It attempts to promote an understanding of the history of ideas which are invested in the spatial form and the use of houses; and, it establishes the principle that the meaning and use of domestic space is not intrinsic to a set of physical characteristics, nor the nomenclature of rooms and their facilities.

Each section of this essay endeavours to describe how houses are the material expression of a matrix of socio-cultural influences, and that these influences vary between two societies stemming from the same Anglo-Saxon culture. Apparently, these influences are often implicit in the activities of household life, yet, as Banham (1978, p.19) has illustrated, they order the use of available resources in prescribed ways. Banham's parable cleverly illustrates the association between possible forms of building shelter and the 'predisposing cultural habits' of people. It is these socio-cultural predispositions which have provided the framework for this study, particularly as they are expressed by social ideas and meaning, and the spatial form and use of domestic facilities for cooking and eating food.

It is possible to explain the meaning and use of these domestic facilities by comparing those provided for families of the same socio-economic rank in different cultures. Facilities for cooking and eating food have been chosen for some very important reasons. Firstly, as Lévi Strauss (1966) has explained, the fact that the preparation and eating of food in spaces associated with the dwelling is common to ALL cultures and societies provides the necessary ingredient for comparisons between different cultures. This would not be the case, however, if bedrooms had been chosen. Secondly, those activities involved in the preparation and eating of food reveal the socially and culturally defined demarcations (if they exist) between male and female, and parent and child roles, which

are not as evident in the use of other spaces and facilities inside the house. Finally, the development of facilities for the preparation and eating of food is largely related to the history of ideas and values upheld by different groups of people in specific socio-cultural contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The first settlement of Australia at Sydney Cove in January 1788 was the genesis for the future development of the English penal colony. The development of that colony into a nation need not be described here. However, the model of culture change used to understand the derivation of Australian domestic architecture will acknowledge that the history of house forms has been an indetachable component of a specific socio-cultural, political and geographical context. This model can be illustrated by the study of the interaction between the images and ideas of the primary parent culture — British society — and the specific requirements of the settlers who were transplanted to this completely different place. In the Australian context, the nomadic aboriginals, unlike the Boers, for example, had a social and cultural heritage without a substantial material culture; furthermore, the interaction between the settlers and the aborigines was, and still is, minimal. This study is therefore different from the explanation of 'how two different cultures have interacted at the Cape' (Lewcock, 1963).

In the Australian context, the important concept to grasp is the adaptation and transformation of specific European cultural predispositions, according to economic, social and political circumstances in the colony. In this respect the content of the colonial culture, and notably its architecture has unique attributes. It is a culture which is founded upon its own institutions, which have regulated the structure, actions and social relations in Australian society. This interpretation contrasts with the widely accepted viewpoint that Australia became a provincial British society following the importation of immigrants, institutions, and material culture from Britain. Such an interpretation fails to account for many other influences: for example the integration of ethnic groups from Germany during the earliest years of settlement in South Australia; the granting of political rights to most men prior to 1850 and to women after 1894, and the specific economic growth of Australia in which the majority of the population have participated. These and other influences have produced a society and culture different from that in Great Britain.

These differences have been expressed in Australian speech, dress, and social customs. A distinct culture has developed during the last two centuries and the dissimilarities between it and the British prototype have become more evident as each decade has unfolded.

Given this interpretation, this paper acknowledges that the development of domestic architecture in Australia ought to be discussed within the wider framework of colonialism, as Gubler (1980) noted:

Colonialism ... involves a complex set of interactions between the 'mother country' and the overseas territories. In matters of architecture, this relationship cannot be reduced to a simple shuttle movement: the importation of picturesque exotic styles would correspond to the exportation of the 'mother country's' schemes of composition.

The principle is ably illustrated by the provision of reticulated water supply in the majority of residential suburbs in the main Australian cities many years prior to the same provision in the main towns in England.

Finally, the importance of a temporal dimension ought to be stressed, because the culture of both the parent and the colonial societies changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A study of the evolving relationship between domestic architecture and economic, social and political factors is crucial, because the parent and colonial cultures served as normative models until the influence from North America became significant during the last half of the nineteenth century, and again after the Second World War.

The method of study adopted in this paper addresses each of these themes. It is founded upon a dual approach that includes both spatial and ethnographic analyses which employ an historical or temporal perspective. Such a method acknowledges that the study of the development of Australian domestic architecture poses two methodological problems: firstly, the endurance of buildings enables people to experience their physical and symbolic characteristics during a relatively long period of time; secondly, during the course of time buildings not only undergo physical transformations but also their meanings and uses change. *In other terms, in architecture the relationship between space and time is a transactional process between building form and social factors, between continuity and change, between permanence and flexibility.*

Having established this important principle the spatial and ethnographic analyses are founded upon:

- i. fieldwork studies of the design, the construction and furnishing of dwellings built at various dates since the settlement of Australia; and
- ii. analysis of diverse documentary sources, which not only consider the design and construction of houses but also record how they were used by their residents in bygone years.

Diverse sources used throughout this study have helped to reveal those explicit social, political and economic factors, as well as those implicit socio-cultural factors, which have influenced the development of government financed houses for families in Australia and England during the last two centuries. The serial of health and housing legislation, the evolution of domestic technology and family life, the intentions of social reformers and the ideas of architects and planners have been scrutinized in many public, professional and government publications. Moreover, with respect to the novel, writers such as D.H. Lawrence have provided vivid descriptions of the design and use of domestic space. From these accounts an understanding of the meaning of facilities and activities in the dwelling can be provided: Hence, in *Sons and Lovers* (1913, p.2) the use of specific rooms for particular domestic activities in some houses in an English mining village is lucidly portrayed:

The Bottoms, consisted of six blocks of miners' dwellings, two rows of three, like the dots on a blank-six domino ... The houses themselves were substantial and very decent. One could walk all around seeing little front gardens with auriculas and saxifrage in the shadow of the bottom block; seeing neat front windows for the aunts. But that was outside: that was the view on to the uninhabited parlours of the colliers' wives. The dwelling room, the kitchen, was at the back of the house facing inward between the blocks, looking at the scrubby backgarden, and then at the ashpits ... So, the actual conditions of living in the Bottoms, that was so well built and that looked so nice, were quite unnecessary because people must live in the kitchen, and the kitchens opened on to that nasty alley of ashpits.

The analysis of these documentary sources has been complemented by ethnographic studies of the design and appropriation of space in two samples of houses in each country. These studies have been completed at two housing estates constructed by local governments in the western suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia, and at Cherry Hinton, Cambridgeshire, England. In each community a sample of thirty houses not more than 10 years of age were compared with a sample of thirty houses 25-35 years of age. Within each group of houses there were three

different floor plans, each variant being related to the design of space and facilities for cooking and eating food. It is necessary to note here that the sample of houses in each community has provided a temporal dimension to this cross-cultural study for the following reasons. On the one hand, the influence of the evolution of domestic technology in houses of this age difference can be related to the design and use of facilities for cooking and eating food; on the other hand, the broad age difference of one generation between the inhabitants of each group of houses has permitted a study of the different values that may exist between different age groups in the same society.



Fig. 1 The backs of houses at Fulbourn Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, included in the ethnographic approach in this study.

In each sample the age groups of the family/households can be clustered into the following three groups: those thirty per cent of households in which the married couple were 55-65 years of age; those forty per cent of households in which the married couples were 35-45 years of age; and the thirty per cent of households with married couples less than 30 years of age. The predominant household structure was the nuclear

family; however, there were four one-parent families, two being older respondents who were widows. Each family had one, two or three children and in all but a few cases at least one of the children was living at home. In each country the sample was homogeneous in terms of race and socio-economic rank; there was only one immigrant parent in each community and the heads-of-households had similar wage earnings.

The ethnographic approach in this study has primarily been concerned with how the residents in each group of houses experienced and appropriated facilities for cooking and eating food. A structured interview was used to direct a discussion of this subject with each household. Furthermore, emphasis was given to direct observation: photographs, sketches and notes were used to record the arrangement and style of furniture as well as those changes which the residents had made to the physical fabric of the house.

In each country, the residents were contacted personally and asked whether they would like to discuss the design of their house, and specifically the way they used the space and facilities. In all cases the housewife was the respondent. The discussion usually lasted an hour and frequently coffee or tea were served. Although the sample size in this cross cultural study has been relatively small, the personal element of an in-depth study has yielded a richness of detail which would otherwise have been lost if the sample size had been large and quantifiable survey techniques had been employed. Hence, it was possible to develop an understanding of the classification of spaces and objects with precision: for example in England the 'kitchen' is not synonymous with the 'scullery'.

Given the gamut of historical and ethnographical data which this study has provided, the meaning and use of domestic facilities for cooking and eating food is considered in this essay according to an ecological approach, whereby the culture of domestic life is considered as a single interacting whole. The intention of this study is to illustrate how the home and household life can be considered in terms of a structural framework, using the term 'structural' in the sense used by Lévi Strauss (1968). In essence this framework has been employed for the following reasons. If the spatial form and use of domestic space (or another socio-cultural phenomenon) has a social meaning, then there ought to be an underlying system of constitutive rules or conventions which make this meaning possible. For example, an observer with no knowledge of a specific culture when confronted with a ritual food ceremony could present a description of the activities which occurred, but he would be unable to grasp their meaning and so would not be able to treat them as socio-cultural phenomena. The activities would only become meaningful

to the observer when he had been made aware of all the rules and conventions involved with the food ceremony. Thus, if a particular dinner guest was considered impolite by others eating food, it would be the knowledge of those relational features which differentiate impolite from polite behaviour which the observer would need to know before he could understand why certain activities were considered impolite.

As this example illustrates, it is not the intrinsic qualities of socio-cultural phenomena but their differential features which are the bearers of social meaning. Therefore, in this study a distinction will be made between the space, objects and activities of household life, and the sets of distinctive or differential features which invest them with meaning. In this sense, the design and use of facilities for the preparation and eating of food, those customs associated with food, and the roles of the housewife and other persons in the kitchen will be considered as sets of complementary information which, as a whole, can provide an understanding of the meaning and use of these domestic spaces and facilities in two different cultures. After an historical review of the evolving design and use of domestic facilities for cooking and eating food in Australia and England, some of the most important findings of this study will be discussed in terms of the classification of space and activities, the social customs associated with the preparation and eating of food, and domestic roles, routines and rituals.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTS

When a housewife in Australia washes her children's clothes in the laundry, her counterpart in England usually undertakes the same activity in the kitchen and often in the kitchen sink. It is apparent that in most houses built in Australia during the last two centuries the kitchen has been classified as a space solely for cooking and eating food, and there has usually been a separate room for washing clothes and linen. Moreover, current building legislation in some States of Australia has made the provision of a separate room for clothes washing obligatory. In England, however, cooking, eating and clothes washing activities usually have been associated together in the same room. Furthermore, the health and housing legislation in England, including current standards related to housing subsidies, have not placed an obligation on the house owner or builder to provide a room separated from the kitchen (or bathroom) for washing clothes.

This distinction may not seem significant but it provides evidence that the same domestic spaces and activities in each country are associated with culturally defined social codes and customs which are reflected in the design and use of houses indigenous to each country; these codes and customs are illustrated in figure 2.



Fig. 2: The diagrammatic representation of activities and facilities that are associated or demarcated in the domestic kitchen in the Australian and English houses in the case study.

There are now several historical case studies of the design and use of houses in Britain. From the evidence collated by Chapman (1971), Sutcliffe (1974), Tarn (1975) and others, it is apparent that the spatial character of basic dwelling types has not changed significantly during the last century.

Since the industrial revolution in Britain, the family unit has been allocated an independent dwelling for household life. Apart from the humblest accommodation for the 'working classes', which often had shared cooking and washing facilities, the dwelling sometimes had a parlour, a 'withdrawing room' adjacent to the front door, with a kitchen room behind, and until the Second World War there was often a small scullery for all domestic washing activities near the back door. There were two or three bedrooms with a separate bathroom and toilet (commonly provided upstairs after the First World War), completely demarcated from the living rooms.

Irrespective of the floor area of the house the organization of space followed the same pattern. The interior of the house was divided into a number of strongly demarcated spaces, each classified according to a particular use and the objects it contained. Hence, it was common to differentiate between spaces for living and spaces for sleeping by placing them on different floors; and, it was common to delimit one room, the parlour, at the front of the house, from the kitchen and all its associated daily living activities at the back of the house. In houses which had a minimal floor area, this system appeared to many observers as an under-utilisation of space. However, although the parlour was rarely used, it served important symbolic and social functions, on occasions such as weddings, birthdays and funerals, when everyone wore their 'Sunday best'. While it remained demarcated from the daily household activities the parlour contained ancestral furniture and cherished ornaments, photographs and heirlooms as if analogous 'to the shrine in a Chinese peasants cottage'.

From the historical case studies of the design and use of houses in Australia presented by Butlin (1964), Barrett (1971), Herman (1970) and others, it is evident that since the earliest months of settlement in Australia the family house has usually been one-storeyed and detached. The acceptance of this house type can be related to those social ideas in colonial society about privacy and private possession, egalitarianism (Ward, 1958), the romantic image of the villa, and to technical reasons such as the availability of land and building materials. The family house has usually been double fronted with four, five or six main rooms, including two or three bedrooms, a 'front' living room and a kitchen, and a separate bathroom, toilet and laundry.

During the nineteenth century it was common for the kitchen, bathroom and laundry to be detached at the rear of the house. Apart from climatic and technical reasons to reduce the risk of fire and the amount of heat in the living room and bedrooms, this spatial demarcation expressed another idea in colonial society: the social rule that 'tainted' servants, who were usually convicts or ex-convicts, should be physically separated from the family and their guests. However, as domestic servants declined in number in the last half of the nineteenth century, and as articulated water supply, gas and electricity were commonly introduced for domestic consumption, the design of new houses in Australia underwent some significant changes.

From about the 1860s, it became increasingly common for the kitchen to be placed under the back verandah with the bathrooms, as illustrated in figure 3. Yet the kitchen still remained a separate room until the

influence of further changes in family life, and the concept of the functionally efficient kitchen were expressed in the design of houses in this century. The laundry has and still remains a room demarcated from the kitchen and while it cannot be assumed that the kitchen has not commonly been used for clothes washing there is no historical evidence to suggest that it was.



Fig. 3 The transformation of the detached kitchen, wash room and toilet into service rooms integrated under the main roof of the house, via the back verandah.

Hence, the common house form in Australia was characterized by a number of clearly defined spaces, with an explicit system for classifying the activities and objects in them. Although rooms for living were demarcated from rooms for sleeping, they were not usually placed on different floor levels as in England. The most significant difference between the organization of domestic space in England and Australia has been the association and separation of clothes washing with the preparation and eating of food.

The classification and spatial zoning of these domestic activities can be considered from a viewpoint which analyses the interrelationships between social ideas and spatial forms. Thus certain social ideas have generated household chores and rituals, notably where, when and how household activities ought to be undertaken. For example, Douglas (1966) has defined and described the classification of domestic activities and objects by employing the social concept of dirt:

Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. . . . We can recognize in our own notions of dirt that we are using a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems. It is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves but it is dirty to place them on the dining table, food is not dirty in itself but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bathroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly bathroom equipment in the dining room, clothing lying on chairs, outdoor things indoors, upstairs things downstairs, underclothing appearing where over clothing should be, and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.

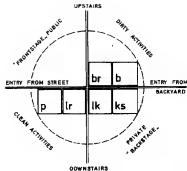
A bipolar concept of dirty/clean has been employed by Haumont and Raymond (1966) in their socio-spatial analysis of the suburban house in France. The conclusion of the authors is interesting in the context of this cross-cultural analysis of domestic space. They have found that interior spaces in the suburban house have commonly been classified and appropriated by the inhabitants according to 'du sale au propre'. Hence, the living rooms in the house have usually been classified as clean whereas other rooms, such as the laundry and storerooms (which are frequently located in the basement), have usually been classified as dirty. Furthermore, it has been noted that the demarcation between spaces classified as clean and dirty has been associated with the position deemed appropriate for sets of household chores and activities: The concept of a relative position for domestic spaces and activities can be related to the social image of the front and back of the house. The front is considered as the public domain, decorative and agreeable, whereas the back, being hidden or screened from public view, is reserved for activities such as clothes drying and household repairs. This socio-spatial model of the suburban house in France does seem to be similar to the organization of domestic space in suburban houses in Australia and England. Yet, there are subtle but important differences between the meaning and use of domestic space in each of these countries which is worthy of explanation.

While the placement of objects and activities in the house has been regulated by social ideas about dirt, nevertheless other factors such as the evolution of domestic technology and social changes related to the preparation and eating of food have been influential. For example, in the English case study it has been noted that dishwashing, clothes washing and sometimes bathing have been considered as one set of activities, and they have commonly been spatially associated. These activities, which aimed at removing dirt from an object, were brought into conjunction and undertaken in one space. The scullery served this

purpose until the advent of the gas cooker, and then a different classification system was employed. According to the findings of the Tudor Walters Committee in 1918, it was an acceptable social practice for the bath to be placed in the scullery and this custom was still evident, but not as common, when the Dudley Committee published its findings in 1944.

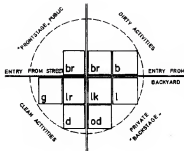
In the corresponding Australian case study, however, the historical evidence has suggested that the kitchen has been reserved for food preparation, eating and dishwashing, and that a separate laundry and bathroom have been provided for clothes washing and bathing. An analysis of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Governments War Housing Programme, published in the *Australian Housing Bulletin* from 1944 has indicated that it was a social custom that clothes washing would not be associated with other domestic activities usually undertaken in the kitchen. In all of the model house plans in these publications the laundry was classified with the bathroom and toilet in a category nominated as 'ablutions' whereas the kitchening was classified as a 'living' room. Hence, dishwashing, laundering and bathing have traditionally been considered as three different types of activity. It was not the removal of dirt which provided the signification, but the object — crockery, clothes, the body — which was being cleansed. Thus three separate spaces were provided for the removal of dirt from three sets of objects.

It has been observed that all houses in the contemporary Australian study had a separate laundry. Furthermore, ALL respondents in all house types said that they would never wash clothes in the kitchen, and in one house type in which the laundry was accessible from the dining-kitchen, this feature was the most disliked design detail of that room for (6 of 8) respondents. There was a consensus amongst all respondents that clothes washing activities (but not ironing clean clothes) should be clearly segregated from cooking and eating activities. In extreme contrast, ALL the respondents in the English case study did their clothes washing in the kitchen irrespective of the possession of a washing machine. Hence, it is apparent that two opposing systems of classification have been revealed by both the historical and ethnographical research in each country: on the one hand, in Australian houses, cooking and eating activities have and must be demarcated from the laundering of clothes and linen; on the other hand, in English houses these activities are not only associated in one room, the kitchen, but (apparently) there has been no alternative to this ordering of household activities.



br = bedroom, lr = living room, d = dining room, lk = dining/kitchen,
 b = bathroom, l = laundry, od = outdoor dining, g = garden, p = parlor,
 ks = kitchen/sentry

The organization of domestic space in England.



The organization of domestic space in Australia.

Fig. 4. The organization of domestic space in Australia and England.

During this century numerous socio-economic changes have occurred in each country which have had influences upon the design and use of houses, and upon family life. One notable change has been the impact of architectural ideas through the publication of design manuals, model house plans, and planning theories such as the Garden City Movement. Other changes have included official housing policies and government housing subsidies. There have also been important developments in the design of domestic appliances, the evolution of domestic science, and the social role of women in the workforce and at home. Each of these changes had far-reaching consequences upon domestic chores and rituals. Yet the spatial organization of activities and objects in the house in both England and Australia has retained a structural coherence: thus the distinction between living and service activities in English houses continues to be less obvious than the same distinction in Australian houses. The social meaning of the relative position of activities and objects has remained steadfast: the social image of 'front' and 'back' continues to be related to the design and use of houses in spite of the contradictions introduced by some architects who have upheld the Radburn planning principle.

Hence, it is apparent that there are social ideas about the rooms in a house, and perhaps especially the kitchen, which are not strictly controlled by a set of intrinsic physical properties. The meaning and use of domestic space is associated with the social classification and coding of activities and objects. These social ideas permit an active interdependence between the spatial form and the use of the dwelling.

SYNTHESIS

Given these findings it is possible to represent the organization of domestic space in each country according to the accompanying diagrams presented in figure 4. This schema accounts for those bi-polar codes for the classification of space, which include front/back, symbolic/secular; clean/dirty; public/private. It also accounts for domestic spaces and activities related to this system of classification. Hence, in the diagram for houses in England the parlour is clean/symbolic/public and above all at the front, whereas the kitchen is dirty/secular/private and at the back. In the houses in Australia the laundry replaces the position of the kitchen/scullery and there is no parlour in the strict sense of that space in English houses. Hence, there would seem to be spatial codes related to

domestic activities and objects which are context-dependent in each country.

The social meaning and use of domestic space is associated with the social classification and coding of activities, and these social ideas permit an active interdependence between the spatial form and the use of domestic space. It is suggested that this interrelationship can be expressed by a set of social codes which include:

- a) *a code for the classification of space, activities and objects.*

The label which is given to an activity or room encodes that event with a meaning. These significations vary between different cultures, and perhaps between different groups of people in the same culture. Hence, the kitchen, a room with the same label in Australia and England does not have the same meaning or range of uses in each country.

- b) *a code for the relative position of space, activities and objects.*

There is a set of social ideas and images which suggest the location of activities and objects in the dwelling, relative to the street or public facade. Such a code, for example, distinguishes between the 'front' and the 'back' of the dwelling in both Australia and England. This code suggests that those activities which are public and social are related to the street and the entrance door, whereas those activities which are private are placed behind.

- c) *a code for the association or demarcation of space, activities and objects.*

There are customary social systems for the classification of sets of activities and objects. Hence the binary pairs of public and private, day and night, or clean and dirty may be used to associate or demarcate domestic activities. In Australia and England it has been noted that the removal of dirt has a specific meaning in each country, which has ordered the position of dishwashing, clothes washing and bathing activities relative to each other in the dwelling.

- d) *a code for domestic activities which indicates the meaning of one activity, a specific meal, in the total set of domestic food activities.*

The significance of a food event not only indicates what food is eaten, how it is embellished, when it is served, and who is present at the table, but also *where* the food is served and eaten.

The classification and coding of activities and objects not only provides an understanding of the social ideas which influence the meaning and use of domestic space, but it also permits the analysis of activity patterns and object systems in the dwelling and how these systems generate spatial forms.

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John Barnie

HOME TOWN

I think of the widows; closed flowers.
Who will find them lovely, remembering
Life in the withered petals of their lips,
In morning coffee rooms
They crowd like memories, sunnily.
The make-up and the perms suggest
Summer frocks and jaunts before the war.
Now they tread to church and pray
For company. They are delicate, like moths
Found clinging to the panes on autumn
Nights. Their powdered cheeks are soft
As downy wings. Their eyes glitter
Like gems in faded boxes, blue, green,
And on fire, as many years ago.

FJALTRING, NW JUTLAND

i

Air and light
Flatten
This already flat

Plum-coloured land,
Pushing the farms to the skyline
Where their red

Roofs
And wind raked windbrakes
Circle you forever.

Here the news is
One road toppled over the cliff
And gone

The farmer ploughing less this year,
The cornstalks thin
To seaward

In the salted earth.
Along the shore
I collected the evidence —

Sea urchins pressed in flint
And something struggling out of stone on
fins
Or legs.

Two dead cormorants
With high shouldered wings,
A granded starfish,

The usual emptied shells.
Across the fields
Gulls flaked

In twos and threes,
And as the tractors
Battled on

Dwarfed
By the hugeness of the light,
Skylarks

Plucked themselves
From the earth
With savage, glittering cries.

Each evening fog came
 Grey backed from the sea, drawn
 Like Grendel

To the yellow lights in houses,
 But standing off
 Among the windbreaks

Biting its wrists
 In envy, or moving out
 Across the new ploughed land

Where lapwings
 Gleamed in the furrows
 When we awoke

The sun startled our faces,
 Skylarks
 Were screaming from the sky.

The sea sets up a roar
 Like a wall of light; half a mile
 Away

It drowns out everything
 Except the nearest lark's
 Scalloped song.

Yet the people live with it
 And its swift
 Erosion of the land

That litters the shore with flints,
 Sea urchin fossils,
 Pips

Spat out
After the winter's
Mastication.

iv War at Fjaltring

The German pill boxes
Dunk and jump in the waves,
Strongmen

Bracing themselves against the horizon
And the ice
Splash of the water.

And they swear
They've never moved —
Yet the sand

Cliffs
Stand ninety yards away,
Yellow and rotten.

Watching the squared-off
Shaven heads
Descending deeper.

Masterful and confident,
Under the green copper, the iron weight
Of the sea.

'The Centrique Part': Theme and Image in Aritha van Herk's Novel *The Tent Peg*

In Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* the goddess, desperate to kindle fire in the unmoved Adonis, offers her body to him as if it were a prime piece of real estate.

'Fondling,' she saith, 'since I have hemm'd thee here
Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer;
Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale;
Grazed on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.'

'Within this limit is relief enough,
Sweet bottom-grass, and high delightful plain,
Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
To shelter thee from tempest and from rain;
Then be my deer, since I am such a park,
No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.'

Landscape and the female body have been represented in terms of one another for so many centuries that, when we look at the great female nudes sculpted by Henry Moore, it seems fitting that anatomical and geographical contour should appear almost identical. Land has always been a precious and vital resource which, with proper management and control, can be made to yield harvests of food or mineral wealth; and in most western societies women have been regarded as a similarly valuable resource yielding both pleasure and profit to men. It is not surprising therefore that the language of cultivation and harvest should figure largely among traditional images for sexual intercourse. In medieval and renaissance times woman's body was generally equated with a garden securely walled around or hedged in. Sometimes it appeared pure and

inviolate — a *hortus conclusus* where the Virgin Mary suckled the Christ Child or sat *virgo inter virgines* among a cluster of female saints and martyrs — and sometimes it was an image of profane delight in Thomas Carew's 'A Rapture'.

I'll seize the Rose-buds in their perfum'd bed,
The Violet knots, like curious Maies spread
O're all the garden, taste the ripned Cherry,
The warme, firme Apple, tips with corall berry:
Then will I visit, with a wandering kisse,
The vale of Lillies, and the Bower of Misse:
And where the beauteous region doth divide
Into two milkie wayes, my lips shall slide
Downe those smooth Allies, wearing as I goe
A tract for lovers on the printed snow:
Thence climbing o're the swelling *Apperubis*,
Retire into thy grove of Eglantine.¹

But the great surge of exploration which, for renaissance Europe, so greatly extended the boundaries of the known world, added a new dimension to these traditional images of garden landscape. John Donne in his eighteenth elegy 'Love's Progress' uses a wry parody of petrarchan imagery to chart the woman's body as a tract of unexplored and possibly dangerous territory, with every feature a navigational hazard. The lover's voyage is undertaken, like so many actual Elizabethan expeditions, in search of gold which can be found only by penetrating inland and probing the depths.

Search every sphere
And firmament: our Cupid is not there:
He's an infernal god and under ground,
With *Pluto* dwells, where gold and fire abound:
Men to such Gods, their sacrificing Coles
Did not in *Alteas* lay, but pits and holes:
Although we see Celestial bodies move
Above the earth, the earth we Till and love:
So we her ayres contemplate, words and heart:
And virtues; but we love the Centrique part.²

Exploration also involves appropriation, as the explorer not only gathers riches but takes possession of the new territory. In Donne's famous nineteenth elegy the speaker, contemplating his mistress's body, exclaims rapturously: 'O my America! my new-found-land', and then immediately considers the financial, constitutional and legal implications of his vision.

My kingdom: safest when with one man man'd,
My Myne of precious stones. My Emperic.
How blest am I in this discovering sheel
To enter in these bonds is to be free:
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.³

In view of such long-standing literary tradition, it seems natural enough to find a more recent poet, A.D. Hope, writing of Australia, a country which is still, from a European standpoint, relatively new, using the language of sexual appraisal.

She is the last of lands, the emptiest,
A woman beyond her change of life, a breast
Still tender but within the womb is dry.⁴

But what kind of significance does the long standing identification of landscape and female anatomy have for a woman reader, and, more importantly, in what ways can a woman writer avail herself of this rich store of literary images? The Canadian writer Aritha van Herk in her novel *The Tent Peg* adapts this tradition in a very individual and interesting way. The book is set in a geological survey camp in the Yukon mountains where the crew spend a summer prospecting for uranium. The landscape in which they work is so formidable and uncompromising that the Englishman on the team, Hudson, is appalled by its dangerousness and air of barren desolation.

And these mountains. Bare, gray, no trees, no grass. They surround you, they press you down, they laugh at you like teeth. It's almost June and they are still snow-covered.⁵

The novel begins with a helicopter flight across the tundra just as the winter ice begins to melt creating a confusing and hazardous pattern of white snow and black water: 'Skull teeth gleam through an invitation; the tundra can both restore and maim.' Although the landscape perpetually shifts and changes, Mackenzie, the leader of the survey team, regards this as part of its fascination and challenge: 'It's that kind of country, changes her mind the minute your back is turned. I like the fickleness; it keeps you guessing' (p.11).

In their survey work the geologists depend upon the maps they bring with them, but these prove an uncertain guide. Only first-hand experience of the formations and contours, which for an office geologist are little more than lines on paper, will make discovery possible, and whether even such direct experience will yield anything depends on the character

and temperament of the observer. The map must constantly be adapted to the shifts and changes in the land it charts. Mackenzie knows this. Long years of practical field experience, together with an intuitive sense of rock and landscape, make him aware that the team is unlikely to find commercially viable uranium deposits in the area where the mining company has sent them, but his openness and awareness enable him to seek out what else may be there. For his second in command, Jerome, on the other hand, the company's directive means the area has to yield uranium. To him the map represents immutable truth, providing a set of rules and directions within which he can confine his own activity and which he tries to impose on others.

Mapping is a central image in the novel both for the way an individual perceives experience and for the ways in which human beings relate to one another. Several of the characters project their own notions of how the world should be onto the harsh Yukon landscape. Hudson compares it to England: '...the geology here is unreal, so complex it's almost impossible to figure out. The age references do nothing but confuse me. These rocks have mineral compositions that I've never seen in England' (p.108). In his eyes the social relationships between the members of the survey team appear savage and barbarous, completely out of harmony with what he regards as the more civilized standards of his own country. Milton, the young Mennonite farm boy, who has always lived in close contact with the earth, finds the soil on the Yukon mountains totally unfamiliar to what he knows on the prairie: 'What can they tell from dirt? Thompson says it's geochemical analysis, but it's only dirt. Grainy and dry, not like the topsoil at home, the way it smells cool and dark when you turn it up behind the discer' (p.101). His deeply and narrowly religious view of life is affronted by the behaviour of his team mates whom he considers godless and licentious. Another geologist, Franklin, uses meditation and poetry to map his world. He believes the mountains are good for his karma and that geology is a way to seek out the wilderness. His colleague, Hearne, tries to make sense of experience by taking photographs, hoping always to catch the perfect picture.

As the summer passes, the various members of the team are forced to modify their personal maps of the world. This is largely due to the presence of the camp cook, J.L. who has applied by letter for the job using the anonymity of initials to obscure her sex, since most survey expeditions are unwilling to hire a woman. She is, however, disconcerted to find that, on their first meeting, Mackenzie genuinely mistakes her for a boy so that she actually has to inform him of the truth. The confusion of identity is partly a comment on how Mackenzie in his personal life has

lost touch with the whole world of relationships between men and women; but it also relates to the theme of transformation which pervades the novel, and it points to the way in which J.L. with her flat-chested androgynous body assumes the shifting, illusive quality of the land itself. Her bony figure resembles the contours of the bare Yukon landscape and her character proves equally indomitable. Each of the nine men on the team responds to J.L. in his own way, finding her an enigma, a source of anxiety, an object of lust or hatred. Some believe she offers them a key to their own lives. Hearne is sure she will be the subject of his perfect picture, and Franklin sees her as an inspiration for his poetry and meditation. Most of them, without quite realising it, spend their time trying to map J.L. just as they map the land they are prospecting, a situation she finds exasperating: 'I'm tired of being weighed and watched and judged and found wanting every minute of the day. I thought I could be alone here. Instead, I find I'm less alone than I've ever been. Here I'm everyone's property. I belong to everyone of these men' (p.106). Gradually most of the men come to regard her as their focus, a figure of potency and inspiration, a source of brightness, light and warmth: 'She centers this whole summer for us.' But for J.L. the emotional pressures are enormous, and the effort of maintaining her separateness and independence extreme.

In a central episode of the novel, the camp is visited by a grizzly bear with her cubs in tow, and two of the crew watch in terror and amazement as J.L. and the bear stand only a few feet apart apparently conversing: 'J.L.'s face is tilted up and the she-bear's face is tilted down and they're looking at each other like they've met before. And then J.L. sweeps off her hat and bows at the same instant that the bear seems to shrug and drop to its feet' (p.108). Immediately before the bear appears, J.L. has been crudely propositioned by Cap, the communications man and general facitum in the camp who considers all women his prey. When she rejects him: 'Cap if you're goddam horny, go find yourself a grizzly bear', he abuses her with obscene vituperation which leaves her feeling defeated and despairing. Later in the book, as they all sit round the fire one night, J.L. tells the legend of Io beloved by Zeus and transformed into a heifer to foil the suspicions of his wife Hera: 'Imagine being turned from a beautiful young woman into a cow, feeling yourself a halred and hoofed and horned beast simply because of the intemperate lust of a god. Inside her beast's form she must have mourned, she must have lowed and kicked in resentment' (p.154). Here the myth becomes a parable of the way men so frequently perceive women merely as animals to mate with. Io could resume human shape only when Zeus gave her up: 'Ironic that

he was only allowed to love her when she was a heifer.' But, in total contrast to Io, the grizzly bear represents a kind of furious and demonic female power arising from the ground itself. For J.L., it becomes a vision of her friend Deborah, a singer whose beauty has made her especially vulnerable to male arrogance and insensitivity, and as she faces the bear she recognizes that her love for Deborah is a principal source of strength and energy in her own life. Through this vision she summons the power to persist and endure in her present situation.

As the novel develops, J.L. is increasingly associated with the force and energy of the earth. When, one night, a substantial portion of the mountain above the camp collapses in a rock slide, missing the tents by a few yards, J.L. alone hears and sees what happens while the men sleep through it all: 'Men with no ears, men with no connection to the earth.' The slide is yet another sign of the shifting, changeable quality of the landscape and its inherent danger — a danger with which J.L. is identified, but which she may in some mysterious way even have power to avert or transform. One of the geologists, Thompson, reflects: 'And maybe she is magic, maybe she did invoke that mountain down on us. Then again, maybe she stopped it, maybe she stood in its tracks so it couldn't reach us. It's possible' (p.126). The rock slide is also associated with the way people in their personal lives may suddenly find the ground shift under their feet. Throughout the summer, Mackenzie is haunted by the memory of his wife who had left him ten years before without a word of warning, and the rock slide represents for him the moment when he begins to see the situation from her point of view, asking for the first time what her reasons for leaving may have been. Mackenzie and Thompson, the two members of the expedition most open to experience and more acutely observant than the others, take crucial decisions about their own lives, guided by J.L. Mackenzie finally accepts that his wife has gone for good and that he is not entitled even to try and bring her back, while Thompson, torn between his work which takes him away from the city for long periods and his love for Katie, a professional dancer, accepts, with some pain, that he must be prepared to spend his life in perpetual balance between the two, happy if Katie remains with him, but knowing that he must never expect to possess or claim her. Such moments of self-recognition are a form of exploration and discovery paralleling the survey for mineral wealth to which the team devote their working hours.

As Mackenzie predicted, the survey area yields little uranium, but with hard work, and against all odds, he and Thompson find substantial gold deposits. Claims must then be staked, and the act of staking becomes an image of putting one's personal mark on what is achieved and dis-

covered: 'I still get that prickle in my blood when I think of staking what I know is a good property, hammering it into two post markings so that you know it's yours, you've got it' (p.163). Because the law permits only eight claims per person, claims must also be staked in J.L.'s name if the team is to acquire the maximum amount of territory. She insists on doing this herself, and it is then that Hearne finally takes his perfect picture of her 'standing over that stake, leaning herself and the hammer into the ground until she becomes a movement of striking, driving that post deep into the temple of the earth, driving it smooth and sure and knowing absolutely where it will go' (p.210). This passage is crucial to the whole scheme of the novel, for staking not only marks ownership, but symbolises penetration of the underlying depths in order to release what is contained there. For J.L.'s true name is Jael, and she is identified with her old testament counterpart who, during a conflict between the forces of Israel and Canaan, killed the Canaanite captain Sisera when he sought refuge in her husband's tent by driving a tent peg through his temple, nailing him to the ground as he slept. In this way she delivered Israel from one of its principal enemies and her action was celebrated in a song of praise by the prophetess Deborah.⁴ The motif of piercing the temple recurs many times in the novel. Milton assures his sceptical tent-mate Hudson that 'The body is the temple of the spirit', but J.L. interprets the word temple rather more precisely:

And only a man would have the nerve to connect himself with God, to name a part of his very anatomy after a place of worship. The forehead of a man is the seat of wisdom, the place of being, the center of thought. How many of them have we seen posed, head ostentatiously propped on a fist. And temple it is, they worship themselves as intently as we poor females have never dared. Worship their own intellectual capacity when it is (if they only stopped to consider the danger) no larger than ours. (p.172)

By her presence and behaviour J.L. breaks open the sleeping temples one by one penetrating the complacency of her companions to create a new awareness and self-knowledge. What in the old testament story is a deed of savage cruelty is here transformed into a redemptive act.

But one member of the team, Jerome, is beyond redemption. Preoccupied with notions of power, hierarchy and authority, he antagonizes everyone, and as the summer progresses, becomes increasingly alienated, blaming this on the presence of a woman in the camp. For him geology is a male preserve with which no woman should be associated, even in the menial role of cook. J.L. perceives him as a constant threat which she must always guard against, since Jerome believes authority can be main-

tained only through aggression, and for him the assertion of sexual dominance — a vital prop to his self-esteem — becomes an act of predatory violence: 'If he can't shoot it or fuck it, he's not interested.' His hatred of J.L. is expressed in images which relate it to the story of Jael and Sisera: 'It's time someone started nailing her down. She gets away with murder.' When, towards the end of the novel, he realises that he has failed to undermine Mackenzie's authority and establish himself as the true leader of the survey team, as he had originally hoped, he falls into a state of crazy paranoia. He goes to J.L.'s tent late at night, and, in a gesture which echoes Jael driving the tent peg into Sisera's temple, points a gun at her head, forcing her out of her sleeping bag in an attempt to rape her. But, as J.L. later comments, he is 'not very good at handling a woman and a gun at the same time', and in the ensuing struggle she gets hold of the gun. The episode ends with Jerome utterly vanquished and humiliated.

Although this is an important victory, what Jerome represents is only temporarily defeated and will continue to exert its menace. J.L. emerges triumphant from her summer experience having evoked admiration, affection and even reverence from men who initially regarded her with resentment, suspicion or amusement. For some of them she has even taken on a kind of mythic quality. But this mythologizing, although an important aspect of the way J.L. is presented in the novel, appears very differently from her point of view. As cook she is associated with images of abundance, nourishment and nurturance, but this involves her in hours of tedious drudgery: 'By the end of the summer I will have washed more plates than I have in my entire life. I didn't count on that. I thought only of the making, the creating, the cooking. And discover that I will spend more time washing dishes than I ever will cooking' (p.60). The demands the men in the camp make upon her sympathy and understanding also cost her great effort: 'They suck at me like quicksand but I have to listen.'

At the end of the summer when all the impedimenta of the camp is being burnt before the return to city life, J.L. leaps on the table where she has previously cooked and dances on it as it stands above the fire: 'And I lift up my arms and I whirl, the skirt heavy around my thighs, dance for them until the table shivers. Whirl and kick in the ecstasy of the flames beneath me, devouring the summer under my feet' (p.225). The dance here retains its ancient and traditional significance as an image of cosmic order and harmony, but it is also, in the course of the novel, associated with flying. The camp has its own helicopter to take the geologists to the different survey areas, and for several of the characters,

J.L. included, flying becomes an exciting and liberating experience. Thompson associates it with his love for the dancer Katie: 'And we're flying, flying over mountains bleak and gray and suddenly the flying turns into Katie dancing, her body caught in mid-air, in a double turn, suspended — flying' (p.141). But flying, especially in the Yukon, although exhilarating, can be extremely dangerous, and Ivan the helicopter pilot is haunted by the fear of crashing. At the end of the novel J.L. must time her dance so that she can leap safely from the table just before it collapses into the flames. In order to dance she must remain precariously aloft maintaining her poise and balance despite the various hazards which threaten to engulf her, so that the final dance becomes a symbol of the difficult balance she has so triumphantly maintained throughout the summer.

Aritha van Herk has absorbed into *The Tent Peg* traditional literary associations between geographical and sexual exploration culminating in the discovery of buried treasure. But she rejects the image of a passive landscape charted, penetrated and appropriated by male discovery. In this novel the land shifts and changes and will yield up her treasure only to those who are prepared to observe and respond to her movements. Images of exploration and discovery are also applied to relationships between men and women. The men in the novel believe it is for them to define and delineate their relationship with the woman in their midst, only to find that in the process they themselves are penetrated and laid open, for the successful discovery of new territory must inevitably involve a process of self-discovery.

NOTES

1. 'A Rapture', ll.63-74, *The Poems of Thomas Carver*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford, 1949).
2. 'Elegie XVIII', ll.27-36, *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (Oxford, 1912).
3. 'Elegie XIX', ll.28-34.
4. A.D. Hope, 'Australia' in *Collected Poems* (London, 1966).
5. Aritha van Herk, *The Tent Peg* (Seal Books, Toronto, 1982), p.66. Subsequent references will be in brackets immediately following quotations.
6. The story is found in *Judges*, chapters 4 and 5.

Richard Stevenson

CATTLE EGRETS

Come around a corner
and they're there:
conspiratorial clansmen
holding the close white flames
of themselves above the dark
secret of the waterhole.

A sheet on a line,
they catch the wind together,
billow out in a sort of sail
beneath the gathering shoals
of cumulo nimbus.
Your nimble fingers preen the horizon.

Click, click, click:
pieces of the sky are carefully removed,
folded like laundry in a basket,
leaving you five clothes pegs,
five pink mouths
gaping in each hand.

Anjana Basu

WORDS FOR NAREN

The words I have for Naren are purely prose.
Prose. Prose of a chest
A mat of hair against the sun. Sometimes
It's counting the tiles on a floor
Held down. Or a bed field of crumbs
And a dirty foot. Even greying underwear.
Sometimes an evening spent in hatred
Following in ones head the footsteps of a whore
Down some dark lane or a street of crumbling houses.

These are words for Naren.
Perhaps a synonym for rage or hate.
Or even an undefinable word called love
That you could find in rage or hate.
There are other meanings — even other shades
Left out. Footsteps of a child or whore
Or other women deliberately taken
And then the running back to a familiar bed.
I called it lost child.
There were other words too —
Lover, Boyfriend, ex-Husband, boy-husband.
It meant keeping company in an empty room
With haunted corners. With shame
And a telephone wire.
Company against reason or sense
Or the blotting out of a curtain — hiding
From pigeons or from seeking eyes.

These were words for Naren.
Are still perhaps.
Pretended love made in a mirror,
A shuddering belly and tonsils hurt
The way a face may flush or voice darken
Denying everything but lust or hate, or accidental love.
Naren's words.

ADETOKUNBO PEARSE

Apartheid and Madness: Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*

No work in the corpus of African literature dealing with the theme of madness, for example Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*, or Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*, captures the complexity and intensity of the insane mind as does Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*.¹ Bessie Head's thrust into the insane mind and her ability to speak the highly symbolic language of madness derives, it seems, from a combination of the painful personal experience of mental aberration and an interest in psychoanalytical theories.

In *A Question of Power*, Bessie Head uses the psychoanalysts' delimitation of the human mind into the conscious, the sub-conscious, and the un-conscious to portray the totality of her protagonist's experience. She depicts childhood experiences as central to the mental makeup of the adult. There are hints at physiological malfunctions which may have led to the character's mental illness, but the emphasis is on society, the situation of the parents in it, and how these become instrumental in the social instability, as well as the mental imbalance of the protagonist later on in life.

The novel is primarily concerned with, not so much Motabeng where the bulk of the action takes place, but with the protagonist's mental retentions of her South African experience. Consequently, the Elizabeth we meet in Motabeng is a character already predisposed to a mental breakdown. The village of Motabeng in Botswana is the scene of her mental collapse, but the major causes of the collapse are to be found in her history and her experience of life in South Africa.¹

The theory developed by Elizabeth's critics during her growing-up years in South Africa was that because she was born in a mental hospital by a mother believed to be insane, and because her mother commits the insane crime of suicide, she herself was bound to go insane. Bessie Head's narrator undermines this argument of hereditary insanity by exposing the society's prejudicial treatment of Elizabeth, and by emphasizing the social background to Elizabeth's mother's supposed insanity.

In her narrative, Bessie Head takes much of the socio-cultural influences which instruct Elizabeth's sensibilities for granted. The emphasis of the narrative is on the psychological, hence the social factors responsible for the protagonists' psychology are made subsidiary to the effect they produce on the mind. Yet in order to understand the character's psychology, it will be necessary to analyse in some detail the society that is at least partially contributory to its formation. Much of *A Question of Power* dramatises Elizabeth's psychotic experiences. During these experiences, Bessie Head seems governed by the Freudian assertion that the sexual libido is central to man's psychic behaviour. 'It must be said, however, that she is more like Freud's revisionists who adopt a less orthodox approach to Freud's sexual theories recognising early sex frustrations as causative in some cases but insist that factors like «anxiety» or the current life situation are more relevant.'² This latter aspect of Bessie Head's approach, akin to the Jungian culture-based theories of madness, becomes crucial in an analysis of the causes of Elizabeth's madness.

One of the remote, or subconscious causes of Elizabeth's aberration is the stigmatization of an insane mother. There is no clear indication that the woman was actually mad. The only characters who allude to her madness are those members of the establishment who wish to use the point to impress upon Elizabeth her own latent insanity. The real reason for declaring Elizabeth's mother mad seems to lie in the cynical comment by Elizabeth's gaunt principal: 'your mother was a white woman. They had to lock her up, as she was having a child by the stable boy, who was a native' (p. 16). The woman is therefore locked up as mad because of her affair with a native stable boy. What constitutes insanity in this case is

the breaking of South Africa's Immorality Amendment Act of 1957.¹

The question of Elizabeth's mother's real state of mind becomes, however, subordinate to the effect which the stigma of an insane mother has on the young Elizabeth. The maternal family rejects both mother and child, as do various other families, white and black. The reason for this rejection is to be found in the Apartheid Law which forbids persons of black and white races from living together as a family. Hence, the white grandmother who demonstrates her filial ties to a coloured grandchild has to do so secretly.

The family's determination to dissociate itself from Elizabeth and her mother goes beyond the fear of the law. The system of Apartheid creates graver psychological distortions in its subjects. Since by this system blackness implies inferiority, Elizabeth's mother's association with a black man is social pollution. Also in this divisive society where peoples are compartmentalized, the pseudo-scientific theory often associated with debased negritude, which equates white with brain power and black with sexual potency, is very much alive. Elizabeth's mother's relationship with a native is therefore seen as sexual lust. Apart from the government's desire to keep the races apart, for political reasons, there is its desire to keep them apart for moral reasons. To the South African government, Elizabeth's parents are moral as well as political criminals. To the family, both mother and child are sources of social shame, and evidence of sexual depravity.

Elizabeth therefore grows up experiencing both filial and societal rejection. The effect of this rejection on her proves devastating in later life. Elizabeth's rejection is primarily due to her mixed colour. Not being black or white, and yet being both, the mulatto soon develops a distorted view of her position and role in society, especially in a society which classifies people not by what they are intrinsically, but by the colour of their skin. This distorted view of herself, encouraged by the divisive nature of her society, and the schism latent in Elizabeth's mulatto psychology become overt in her psychosis.

In Apartheid South Africa, the problems surrounding the half-caste child begin even before its conception. The union of black and white being illegal, the coming together of its parents is illegal, hence the child is the illegal product of an illegal affair. The child itself personifies a dilemma in a society where the individual is expected to be white or black, for easy classification. The dilemma is more the child's, however, as the government has the classification of 'coloured' or 'Boesman', i.e. bushman, ready for it. When the character involved is one who, like Elizabeth, is extremely sensitive to her social circumstances, the problem

becomes bewildering. With the white people she feels a sense of inferiority due to the streak of 'inferior' black in her. With black people she feels a sense of superiority due to the streak of 'superior' white in her. Not wishing to feel better or worse than anybody, she hates both black and white. Her complexes become even more complicated because she cannot enjoy the temporary purging of pent-up emotion through hating the other, for being white and black, she cannot afford to hate either. To do so would be to reject a part of herself. Finding herself in this double-bound situation, Elizabeth develops an ambivalent attitude to both black and white. Elizabeth's psychosis is the dramatization of the attempt to reconcile these complexes. And the attempt to reconcile her complexes and her ambivalent attitude towards life constitute the social and spiritual strivings at the core of the symbolic nightmarish passages of *A Question of Power*.

Elizabeth's associations and choices in adulthood reveal that she has to some extent accepted, and internalized, the sense of inferiority and evil imposed on her by society. 'Her identification figure is a mother, defined by society as mad, sexually depraved and evil. Because her mother is an unsatisfactory model for her behaviour and ego, Elizabeth herself develops a negative ego. With such a negative view of the self, the character soon develops vague feelings of destruction and decay due to belief in her own misdeeds.'¹ Elizabeth's marriage points to an acceptance of guilt, and 'subconscious' wish for punishment. She marries a gangster just out of jail barely a week after their meeting, and for no apparent reason except a doubtful mutual interest in Eastern Philosophies. The man proves to be an irrepressible sexual pervert. Although Bessie Head condones neither the womanizing nor the homosexuality of Elizabeth's husband, she seems to infer that his sexual aberrance is due at least in part to the soul-stifling conditions of South African life. Like Elizabeth's husband, many of the coloured men are homosexual. The major reason for this is the society's imposition of an inferior status on the coloured men. The explanation given to Elizabeth by another character reveals this:

How can a man be a man when he is called boy? I can barely retain my own manhood. I was walking down the road the other day with my girl, and the Boer Policeman said to me shief, boy where's your pants Am I a man to my girl or a boy? (p. 45)

The problem of the coloured South African's confused sexuality goes even deeper than this explanation. The man who is called a boy may develop a sense of insecurity to the point that he sees himself, not as a

'boy' with limited male status, but as a 'woman', who in most societies is constantly driven to seek the protection of a man for social and other forms of security. The homosexual men of whom Bessie Head writes are not 'boys'. They are 'female-males' who wear women's clothes, 'tied turbans round their heads, wore lipstick, fluttered their eyes and hands and talked in high, falsetto voices' (p.45). Yet another explanation may be added to this psychological dimension. The half-caste men having been labelled the products of a criminal sexual affair between white and black parents, are by implication themselves accused of sexual depravity. 'The homosexual acts of these men may therefore be seen as a demonstration of their negative acceptance of the role imposed on them by society.'⁴ These men are accepting, on the one hand, the role of the subjected female and, on the other, the role of the sexual pervert. Elizabeth's own sexual difficulties, which Bessie Head treats as symptoms of her psychosis, are similar to those of these men.

Behind this abnormal psychology lies South African life, where existence 'was like living with permanent nervous tension...' (p.19). Here white people and black people are constantly in a state of war, with violent hatred and oppression as the weapon of war. As the narrator says, 'the whitepower structure does not see people, humanity, compassion or tenderness'. All it sees is its own power. The power maniacs aspire to be gods with the power of life and death over people. Elizabeth goes to Botswana in search of repose. In Botswana she becomes an involuntary explorer of consciousness, inquiring into the nature of good and evil, into the essence of power.

The questions which Elizabeth ponders on may be summarized thus: Given the South African situation where 'the whites have imposed a whole range of jargon to define their humanity as opposed to the non-humanity of black people',⁵ how does one relate to oneself, and how does one relate to others in the society? These questions, though sociological, attain spiritual proportions because of the Buddhist philosophy which Bessie Head expounds in the novel. 'By this faith, spiritual focus is placed on man's relationship to man and to the human condition, not to an unknown deity.'⁶

Since according to the guiding philosophy of the novel, man's well-being with the world begins with his well-being with himself, Elizabeth's well-being is tested with probings about her self-image. The reactions to these probings often take the form of sexual symbolism. Various references and inferences are made to Elizabeth not having a vagina, or of having an ineffectual one.

This sexual negation is what symbolises the negative view of the self.

The second pertinent question with which Elizabeth's subconscious confronts her is her relationship to society. Here too Elizabeth's relationship proves to be perjured. Both of these negative revelations upset Elizabeth. But according to the narrator, it is the question of her negative relationship to the African society which 'pulled the ground right from under Elizabeth's feet'. When Medusa declares: 'Africa is troubled waters, you know. I'm a powerful swimmer in troubled waters. You'll only drown here. You're not linked up to the people. You don't know any African languages' (p.44), she is implying that Elizabeth is doomed in many ways. Such a prospect is frightening for Elizabeth, because it means she truly becomes a 'non-being'; since she is unacceptable to whites and blacks alike, she can only be identified with the coloured homosexual men whom she has herself mentally annihilated. It will also mean that like the oppressors, whom she detests, she too has developed the superiority complex of the power maniac who prides himself on his detachment from black culture. The seriousness of the mental conflict which surrounds her relationship to black people culminates in her first mental breakdown.

Although Elizabeth is not party to the oppressive machinery of the South African power structure, she shares in its burden of guilt. As Lilian Feder says in her book, *Madness and Literature*, the threatening fantasy figure is usually an internalised agent of guilt and fear. Elizabeth hates herself as she does everybody else. This feeling which is at first 'repressed', boils over during her exile in Motabeng.

Elizabeth's search for repose in Motabeng is disturbed by her mental retentions of South African life. She has stored in her mind the contempt, melancholy, and despair which had instructed her life in South Africa. Suspecting that she is transferring this negative view of life on Motabeng society, she embarks on a mental battle to stop herself. In South Africa, Elizabeth's conscious and subconscious were agreed on hating the society. In Motabeng, however, a conflict arises between the conscious effort to love the new society, and the subconscious state of hatred. Insanity occurs out of the failure to bring the conscious and the subconscious to congruence.

Elizabeth's first impressions of Motabeng appear to have been blemished by the bleak experience of her life in South Africa. The Motabeng that she sees is 'a place with harsh outlines and stark, black trees ... a great big village of mud huts' (p.20). Although the narrator tells us that the people's witchery 'seemed to Elizabeth the only savagely cruel side to an otherwise beautiful society', Elizabeth's observation of the physical and cultural aspects of Motabeng reveals a greater rejection of

the village.' She finds the 'pitch-black darkness of the Motabeng night terrifying'. To her, the life of the Motabeng farmer is a gruesome one. And in spite of interest in farming, 'she cancelled totally the idea of being that kind of farmer who earned her year's supply of food in breakneck battles with dangerous wild animals' (p.60). Realising that in this gruesome confrontation of man with various aspects of his environment there is more benevolence than disdainful detachment, Elizabeth begins to compare life in Motabeng with that of her native South Africa, and to see the positive aspects of Motabeng village life. The Motabeng people are friendly towards one another, and are an easy-going people. In South Africa, on the other hand, the people are unfriendly and are impatient with one another. Whereas the Motabengs greet one another with 'my friend' or 'wait a bit', the South Africans give each other 'the kind of greeting one dog gives another, 'Hey, Kaffir, get out of the way' (p.21).

In spite of her infatuation with Motabeng life, Elizabeth finds that she cannot share in its peace and community feeling. She is excluded from the community partly because of the people's cautious attitude to strangers, especially those like Elizabeth who would not confide in them through mutual gossip of village life, but more essentially because of her own attitude of withdrawal, a sort of defence mechanism, conditioned by her early experience of societal rejection.

When Elizabeth collapses into madness, it is without any apparent reason. She suddenly begins to rave against a man she hardly knows. The significant thing about her action here is the animosity she shows towards the man for no other reason than that he is black. The 'provoking agent' on the occasion of her first breakdown is a black face, a vivid reminder of the colour conflict in her subconscious. Since colour conflict is not a major issue in Motabeng, and yet so vital in the onset of Elizabeth's madness, the causes of her psychosis must be traced to South Africa where the colour problem is an integral aspect of daily life. What comes through Elizabeth's psychotic episodes in Motabeng is the dramatization of her subconscious where the memory of South African life lives in symbolic form.

The focus of *A Question of Power* is on the problem of good and evil. The novel attempts to explore the sources of evil, to expose its true face, and to show the misery and suffering it inflicts on human life.¹⁸ Through the character Elizabeth we see how naked evil, when it invades an individual's total being, can be the cause of psychic disorder and personality disintegration. During the monumental battle which takes place in her mind, Elizabeth tries to dispel the belief current in South Africa that might is right. She tries to instil in her psyche the Buddhist belief in the

righteousness of the meek and lowly. The ensuing psychological battle involves her whole being and in the end transforms her into a new personality.

Bessie Head structures Elizabeth's madness along the lines of basic Existential Psychoanalysis. The characters Sello, Medusa, and Dan are not the real human characters of conventional literature, rather they are aspects of Elizabeth's mind, concretized in her fertile imagination. These ghoulish characters, visible only to Elizabeth, are the personified equivalent of her inner being; the subconscious, and the unconscious. The character Elizabeth who is critical of the evils of South African life is the conscious self, 'Sello' is her subconscious, close to her and sharing her belief in goodness. 'Dan' is her unconscious reflecting the South African collective unconscious pervaded by the forces of evil. 'Sello in the brown suit' and 'Medusa' are the derivatives of her subconscious.¹¹

Elizabeth's nightmarish 'journeys into the soul' begin with a dialogue with her subconscious 'Sello'. 'Sello' encourages her to proceed on her inquiry with the argument that 'Everything was evil until I broke down and cried. It is when you cry, in the blackest hour of despair, that you stumble on a source of goodness' (p. 34). Sello's positive influence, with the figure of the Buddha playing a prominent role, does not last long, however, before the negative derivatives of the subconscious, 'Sello in the brown suit, and the wild-eyed Medusa', take over her subconscious. The images of evil and corruption which these present in Elizabeth's mind are only surpassed by 'Dan', Elizabeth's unconscious who may be called the anti-christ figure in the novel.

The 'wild-eyed Medusa' is boastful, aggressive, depraved and power-drunk. Like the power maniacs of South Africa, 'Medusa' and 'Sello in the brown suit' are narrow-minded dictators who feel insecure in a flexible universe. No one is good or right but themselves. They are all-powerful and all-knowing — everyone else is insignificant.

In their attempt to negate Elizabeth, 'Sello in the brown suit' and 'Medusa' accuse Elizabeth of sexual inadequacy. They tell her 'she hadn't a vagina', and they identify her with the sexual perversion of homosexuality. The aspect of their assault which Elizabeth finds most disturbing is their attack on her social inadequacy. To Elizabeth, man's relationship to man is the core of human spirituality. This accusation of social failure therefore constitutes an accusation of spiritual insufficiency. Her accusers 'played on her experiences in South Africa' where there is permanent tension between the people of differing races. It is in this spirit of segregation that 'Medusa' identifies Elizabeth rigidly with the coloured homosexual men, and accuses her of hating Africans. By

'Medusa's rigid classification of people, a coloured person cannot survive in Africa, cannot know Africa, and cannot love, or be loved by Africans. Such a prospect would destroy Elizabeth's soul, for her search is for a universal brotherhood of man.

While 'Sello in the brown suit' and 'Medusa' are openly hostile to Elizabeth, and openly declare their lust for power, 'Dan' uses subtler methods to achieve the same ends. 'Dan' promises to love and protect Elizabeth. He feigns humility and tries to win her trust by it. 'Dan's declared innocence proves to be a deception. His method of perpetrating evil is similar to that of the mythical trickster god who appears to men in a medley of forms setting people against one another and leaving death and destruction in his trail. 'Dan's appeal for trust is designed to unarm her, so that her consciousness may be more easily assailed with 'a ruthless concentration on the obscene'. 'Dan's assault takes the form of flagrant images of corrupting, of child molestation and rape, of homosexuality, bestiality, incest and death.

Being Elizabeth's unconscious, 'Dan's power over Elizabeth is more profound than that of 'Sello in the brown suit' and 'Medusa', both aspects of the subconscious. 'Dan' goes to the roots of her being, and it is from this fundamental level that he launches his attack. 'Dan's strategy is to destroy any sense of love or respect Elizabeth may have for herself, and thereby destroy her love and respect for others. This 'Dan' does by flaunting before her his perverted love affairs and sexual lust. This is meant to remind her of her sexual depravity on the one hand, and of her sexual inferiority on the other. Dan reduces love to mindless, loveless copulation. For a while, this perverted version of love is all that is available to Elizabeth. Finding it unacceptable, Elizabeth is compelled to live without love, even though love is an essential factor in her search for spiritual fulfilment.

In 'Dan's stunted visions everything and everyone is perverted. He tries to fill Elizabeth's soul with the pervading influence of evil, not only by associating himself and Elizabeth with evil, but by including the whole of Africa in the charade. This vision of 'Dan's 'began to make all things African vile and obscene. The social defects of Africa are first the African man's loose, carefree sexuality' (p.137). It also accuses the African of savage cruelty, which according to him has its origins in the balance of terror created by witchcraft practices.

Elizabeth says it is the accusation that she is dissociated from the African world that discomforts her the most. What comes through the narrative, however, is her obsession with sexual perversion, and the tortuous effect it has on her. At points of deep psychosis, it is images of

sexual lust and sexual perversion which swamp her unconscious. The preoccupation with sex and its perversion seems influenced by the author's belief that sex, rather than being merely an expression of sensual lust, should be seen in the religious sense as the consummation of the unity of man and woman.

Although not as well entrenched as the forces of evil in South Africa, the racialist oppressors have their counterparts in Motabeng. These are the 'power people' like Camilla. Camilla is egocentric and aggressive. She is always determined to impress on all around her a sense of her own superiority. Camilla seems obsessed with the need to negate the Africans. She declares with her accustomed air of self-importance, 'I don't understand these people. They don't know anything at all, and they're -so lazy-' (p.78). She relishes in contrasting this alleged ignorance of the Africans with the heightened culture of her own Danish society. Elizabeth draws a polarity between Camilla's 'scatter brained assertion of self importance' and 'small-boys' air of quiet, authoritative manly calm'. With Camilla's arrival, the vegetable garden is turned from a heaven to 'the most miserable place on earth'. Small boys' presence, on the other hand, radiates peaceful growth.

The novel itself is structured along similar lines of polarity. The episodes which present Elizabeth's inner life are characterized by images of darkness, of death and destruction. Those that deal with her outer life show her in the life-creating process of farming, where community involvement is used as therapy to come back into the rhythm of the normal world. Elizabeth's association with vegetable gardening brings her in contact with 'the wonderful strangeness of human nature', with the life force of the bright green leaves. Her involvement with Eugene's local industries workgroup contributes to this creative aspect of her life. We also learn that, unlike in the torment of her inner life where 'Dan' debasest everything and everyone, among the Setswana, 'people are kings and queens to each other', and there is spirituality in everything.

Through her inner torment in the hands of 'Medusa' and 'Dan', and her working experiences with the vegetable garden and various community self-help projects, Elizabeth finds a necessary contrast between the forces of evil and those of good. She is aware of the differences between the initial 'Sello', that part of her consciousness that believes in the essential goodness of all men, and the later 'Sello', and other negative derivatives of the subconscious and unconscious, such as 'Dan' and 'Medusa' who treat all of life with derision. In her life experiences, she draws a line between the insensitive and mechanical approach to life of characters like Camilla, and the unassuming attitude of charac-

ters like 'Small-boy' and Bergeute; between the simplicity of the latter, and the former's tendency to regard complexity and incomprehensibility as the height of good taste.

Bessie Head's intention in *A Question of Power* is quite didactic. She preaches against racial discrimination and social segregation. She preaches against a life obsessed with the pursuit of material wealth and power. She condemns human oppression and exploitation in all its facets. 'She wishes for a multi-racial society which utilises the workable aspects of both white and black cultures for the mutual good of all.'¹² The co-operation between Eugene, Crunner, Kenosi, Tom, Woody and Elizabeth herself on various self-help projects exemplifies this. Through her epic battle with the inner forces of evil the character Elizabeth comes into the possession of certain life-sustaining truths. Through this spiritual enlightenment akin to Buddhist philosophy, Elizabeth becomes convinced that the power maniac is really a fickle-minded individual. His pursuit of power being a smoke-screen for a deeply seated sense of inferiority and insecurity. The victim on the other hand is flexible and free. He is not afraid of losing since his position already constitutes his loss.

Only through humility and sacrifice can one aspire to love. Love is giving, not taking, nor expecting to be given in return. God is not a great unknown, but an everyman who does good for the betterment of man. And heaven is not a remote unseen, but a world-society inspired by man's great ideals such as freedom of thought and expression, democracy and human rights. By this philosophy, religion is a function in which all of mankind participates, for man is God, and God man. The God-head is achieved through humility and love of man, through contribution to the maintenance of love and peace within society. By this token, the 'thunderbolt-wielding' gods who drive people to religion through fear are nullified. These gods, the all-knowing, all-powerful gods who jealously guard what they believe is their monopoly of power and wisdom are the avaricious precursors of society's power maniacs.

The socio-political system of apartheid creates perpetual tension in the society. To the sensitive and concerned individual especially, the conflicts and evils of life within the system can lead to a dissociation of the psyche. It is this destructive tendency of apartheid that leads to Eugene's disturbing but valid observation that 'South Africans usually suffered from some form of mental aberration' (p.58). An in-depth analysis of Bessie Head's narrative reveals that although her protagonist survives the pangs of madness and attains spiritual salvation, the chain of evil is not necessarily broken.¹³ When at the end of the story we are told of the protagonist: 'As she fell asleep, she placed one soft hand over her

land. It was a gesture of belonging' (p.206), it would appear that she has made her peace with Motabeng. But viewed in the total human construct of the novel's philosophy, this apparent reconciliation can only be at best arbitrary, even escapist. For Elizabeth as an individual, Motabeng serves as a soothing counter-force to the depressive environment of South Africa. But using Motabeng, which is not the scene of the cause of her aberration as much as the scene of its cure, suggests that the real causes of anxiety and tension are still quite intact. The pervading tone of the narrative echoes strongly Bessie Head's primordial fear that 'most of what one clearly despises has the power to control the world and inflict suffering'.¹ Although far from celebrating the indestructability of apartheid, *A Question of Power* dramatizes in psycho-existentialist terms its uncanny ability to threaten human sanity and disrupt social harmony and balance.

NOTES

1. Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* (London: Heinemann, 1974). All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
2. See also 'Some Notes on Novel Writing', an address presented by Bessie Head to the Writers Workshop of the UBLS (Gaborone campus), April 1976, published in Sepho Sepamla, ed., *New Classic*, No 5, 1978 (pp.1-4), and 'Conversations with Bessie', typescript interview with Betty Franklin referred to in Christopher Heywood's 'Traditional Values in the Novels of Bessie Head', in Daniel Massa, ed., *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature* (Makua: University of Makua Press, 1975), p.15, all of which show that the turmoil worked out through Elizabeth in Botswana is really fashioned by Bessie Head's South African experience.
3. S.E. Hyman, 'Psychoanalysis and Tragedy' in Benjamin Nelson, ed., *Freud and the Twentieth Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), p.172.
4. Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p.441.
5. J.E. Myers and B.H. Roberts, *Family and Class Dynamics in Mental Illness* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), p.251.

These two authors in their research show how a person's psychology is greatly affected by the society's assessment of the adult (usually a parent) on whom he models himself as a child, i.e. his 'identification figure'.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.251-5.
7. In Bessie Head's letter to Christopher Heywood, dated 13 May 1978.
8. Trevor Ling, *The Buddha* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1975), pp.116-21.
9. Elizabeth's resentment of the poverty of Motabeng and of being initially rejected by the people of that village is natural. This would be similar to Bessie Head's reaction to the feelings of alienation which Jane Grant, in 'Bessie Head, an Appreciation' in

- Abigail Masley, ed., *Bananas*, No 22, August 1980 (London), pp.25-6, says Ma Head first experienced in Botswana. *A Question of Power*, we are told by Jane Grant on Bessie Head's authority, is autobiographical.
10. Jane Grant, *op. cit.*
 11. My analysis is here guided by the general psychoanalytical division of man into the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious, or the ego, the super-ego, and the id, and more specifically by Harry Slochower in 'Contemporary Psychoanalytical Theories on Creativity in the Arts' in Joseph Strelka, ed., *Literary Criticism and Psychology* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1976) pp.207-19, which demonstrates the peculiar relationship between these levels of the human mind.
 12. Bessie Head, 'Some Notes on Novel Writing' (*op. cit.*); *evil*, this article suggests, is like Medusa, the many-headed gorgon of Greek mythology, which has the uncanny ability of self-reproduction.
 13. Much critical comment, it would appear, disagrees with this view. See for example Christopher Heywood's 'Traditional Values in the Novels of Bessie Head' (*op. cit.*), A. Ravenscroft, 'The Novels of Bessie Head' in C. Heywood, ed., *Aspects of South African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Ojo-Ade's 'Bessie Head's Heroine, Victim or Villain' in *Busharu*, No 5, 1978; Jane Grant's 'An Appreciation'; and Kola Wale Ogungbesan's 'The Cape Gooseberry also Grows in Botswana' in Yande Diob, ed., *Presence Africaine*, No 189, 1979. These critics all seem to be of the opinion that the individual salvation attained by Elizabeth at the end of the novel is symbolic of the beginnings of societal and spiritual liberation. This optimistic interpretation in my opinion fails to come to terms with the overriding philosophy of the novel which implies that any attempt to deny the efficacy of diabolical forces in life, albeit unacceptable, is to falsify the human experience.
 14. Bessie Head's letter to Christopher Heywood, May 1978.

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Ambiguity and Ambivalence in R.A.K. Mason

Close reading of poems — except in the classroom — has become rather unfashionable as an academic discipline. In the case of the New Zealand poet R.A.K. Mason, the result has been unfortunate. It is really no exaggeration to say that we have hardly yet begun to consider just what these poems mean. They are far more enigmatic — and far less easily typecast — than discussions of individual examples by J.E. Weir or Charles Doyle (Mason's major critics so far) would suggest.¹ In defence of these commentators, it must be conceded that the poems have their difficulties. It is tempting to see them as conveying one attitude in a rather austere or even clumsy manner. My own inclination has been to see the Christ figure in the poems as a disguise for the poet himself, victimized by New Zealand society. I would still maintain that this view is legitimate, but I have come to realize that it is incomplete. What is more important is that no matter whether Mason saw himself as Christ or not, his attitude to the Christ figure is ambivalent.

Such critical discoveries are only to be arrived at through prolonged and careful attention to the language of the poems, and in particular to its ambiguity. It is not my intention to suggest that the ambiguity is confined to Mason's handling of the Christ figure, but in this paper I shall chiefly confine myself to that figure which I believe to be central to and typical of his poems. I hope the reader will bear with me while I examine one of Mason's best known poems in some detail — not in A to Z fashion, but with concern for some of the poem's ambiguities and the possibility that they reveal ambivalence, or at least a richness of meaning, rather than trivial word games or ineptitude. My first example is 'Ecce Homunculus':²

Betrayed by friend dragged from the garden hailed
as prophet and as lord in mockery
hauled down where Roman Pilate sat on high
perplexed and querulous, lustily assailed
by every righteous Hebrew cried down railed
against by all true searers — still no sigh
escaped him but he boldly went to die
made scarcely a moan when his soft flesh was nailed.

And so he brazened it out right to the last
still wore the gallant mask still cried 'Divine
am I, lo for me is heaven overcast'
though that inscrutable darkness gave no sign
indifferent or malignant while he was passed
by even the worst of men at least sour wine

One reason why a reader may consider some of the grammatical connections, at least, ambiguous is that the poem is thinly punctuated. Weir refers to Mason's journal, 'I find it very hard in writing to know just how to punctuate properly, especially just where I ought to put the commas'. Doyle, who discusses the poem with attention to a few of the words and phrases, appears to see a similar clumsiness, claiming that in 'mid-octet there is some momentary confusion as to whether Christ or Pilate is being described' and complaining about the lack of precise status of 'indifferent or malignant'.

I do not think that Mason's comments about his punctuation can be taken at face value. There can be only one reason why he inserts a comma after 'querulous': the fact that he wants to avoid the confusion which Doyle accuses him of. If the comma had not been there, 'confusion as to whether Christ or Pilate is being described' would have been possible. Indeed, since no punctuation occurs before this comma, it would have been logical for us to conclude that 'perplexed and querulous' refers to the same person as 'lustily assailed'. The presence of the comma can only indicate that two separate persons are being described, and it is at once obvious that 'lustily assailed' continues the series 'Betrayed by friend', 'dragged from the garden', etc.

In other words, there is no ambiguity or confusion here, not even 'momentary confusion', since the comma which creates a moment's thought is a clear marker. But Doyle has a better point with regard to 'indifferent or malignant' in the penultimate line of the poem, at least in the sense that the precise status of that is hard to determine (whether or not it ought to be easier is a different critical question).

Theoretically, and particularly in view of the enjambement after 'sign', we might connect 'indifferent or malignant' with either that word or with 'that inscrutable darkness'. But Mason is not likely to mean that heaven might or should have given an indifferent or malignant sign. In other words, the grammatical ambiguity is probably an indication of ineptitude rather than intention. Mason's point must be that Christ construed the darkness as a sign of his divinity, but that the darkness itself was merely inscrutable (not a sign of anything) and did not produce a confirmatory sign either, acting with indifference to Christ's and our feelings, or even malignantly, in withholding a sign. The true ambiguity, here, is that of Mason's attitude to Christ. With one part of his mind, Mason appears to think that heaven should have given a sign, and that its failure to do so is a shortcoming. Yet at the same time, we may, with Christ, believe that the darkness actually itself is a sign, and that no other sign is needed. In that case, any comment on heaven being either indifferent or malignant is simply beside the point.

Fundamentally, then, Mason is here torn between two quite different impulses: that of the believer and that of the sceptic. And the believer would like to feel what the sceptic rather crudely rejects. The sceptic certainly comes to the fore when Mason contemplates the workings of 'heaven', but the figure of Christ makes him wonder. Should we believe, like Christ, that heaven takes a benevolent interest in us? Can we believe that we are divine, or at least that Christ was? These are questions raised by the picture of Christ's suffering, and delicately offered as possibilities for us to reflect upon rather than that anything definite is asserted despite the seeming confidence of the claim that heaven 'gave no sign'.

The contradiction between this claim and Christ's is no doubt exactly what we are meant to ponder rather than think that Mason does not know what he is doing or wishes us to reject Christ's view. Other expressions in the poem are similarly meant to stimulate our thinking and feeling about Christ. For example, in line 2, is Christ 'lord in mockery' or hailed as such? Or has he been hailed, in mockery, as no more than a pseudo-lord? In line 5, is an expression like 'every righteous Hebrew' merely sarcastic/ironic, or also to be taken at face value? In all probability, Mason has calculated the effect of the language very exactly and in such a way that one may postulate that a phrase like this on the one hand expresses something which he really feels while on the other it is meant to be interpreted as something from which he ironically detaches himself. If so, 'though that inscrutable darkness gave no sign / indifferent or malignant' may also have a similar status of a statement which the author partly believes and partly rejects.

Enough has been said about this poem for it to serve as an example for my argument generally. I am not taking into account the question of Mason's identification with Christ. It is possible that at the end Mason is not merely drawing a contrast between 'heaven' and 'even the worst of men', but also between himself and Christ — if we put heavy emphasis on *he* in the second but last line. Contrary to what I once thought,⁵ I do not believe that this ambiguity is as clear, or as significant, as the ambivalence displayed in the way Christ himself is approached.

I am at a loss to understand Doyle's opinion that the 'gallant mask' at the beginning of the sestet shows an 'unsatisfactory ambiguity'. I find the ambiguity highly satisfactory, not merely because it is artistically interesting, but because it reveals a profound ambivalence in Mason's attitude to Christ. In the end, the poet's attitude is surely even more important than his language.

Similarly with a poem like 'Judas Iscariot'. Many are inclined to see the poem as praising, or at least celebrating the vitality of, Judas. My own reaction used to be contrary to this, postulating that Judas is treated with irony. I now think that the poet has an ambivalent attitude to both Judas and Christ.

Coming to the poem with a sense of context, one may well assume that it is critical of Judas. Judas betrayed Christ, and it would be logical for Mason to count on his readers condemning Judas's action, apart even from the fact that Mason shows a persistent preoccupation with Christ which, at least at times, is sympathetic rather than critical, for example in 'Oils and Ointments' and 'On the Swag'. There is no reason, however, why Mason's attitude should be conventional, and it need not be consistent from poem to poem. Even so, such circumstances as I mention do support the view that Mason does not approve of Judas. Non-poetic comments, too, are to this effect: Weir quotes Mason's statement that 'the main source of human sorrow may well lie in the man acting cheerfully and blindly in his own interest' — a statement easily applicable to Judas in this poem, 'cheerfully' being the most revealing word. The image of Judas as a thrush is something we should remember when reading 'Their Sacrifice', which speaks of 'the man they're hanging/ while the thrushes sing', returning to 'Judas Iscariot', we can only feel less enthusiastic about thrushes than before. In fact, Mason appears to contrast Judas's ability to sing with the fact that Christ is 'voiceless' at the end of 'In Perpetuum Vale' and that his own 'voice is cracked and harsh' in 'Song of Allegiance'.

At the same time, though, it is difficult to resist the feeling that the poem does not only criticise Judas, but shares some of his vitality. There

is the confident eloquence of the language to begin with, singing 'like the thrush' rather than the product of a 'cracked and harsh' voice. And whatever one's intellectual reservations, one's natural instinct readily responds to a man 'greatly given to laughter', living 'gay as a cricket'. And this reaction can be rationally defended by referring to 'Arius Prays' where Christ is asked: 'Be with us Lord not only with our best/ but when we mock your name and scoff and rail' (my italics).

This whole poem sees Christ emphatically as a human figure with a body 'not to be saved' and a soul which 'drank with the rest annihilation's drink'; Christ is not above us, and for this reason can be asked to be 'with us' even when we are Judases. One presumes that Mason, while on the one hand viewing Judas as a villain and Christ as his noble victim, on the other hand is working towards a vision that, in line with his growing Marxism, will see both as belonging to a common brotherhood of men.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that Mason would regard criticism of Christ as sacrilegious. No doubt the poet's predominant attitude is one of sympathy rather than rejection, but it is not always one of respect for Christ. Let us for example consider 'Nails and a Cross', which starts off with lines which may well arouse our unmixed sympathy and even respect: 'Nails and a cross and crown of thorn,/ here I die the mystery-born.'

The succeeding lines alter our reaction by their colloquialism:

here's an end to adventuring
here all great and valiant things
find as far as I'm concerned a grave.

Clearly, if Christ himself can speak with such lack of solemnity about his role, we are to consider the possibility that he has been indulging in some rather grandiose postures. And the disrespect for Christ thus tentatively provoked within us grows into something more certain in the lines of the final stanza:

And I see, if I squint, my blood of death
drip on the little harsh grass beneath
...
and while the troops divide up my cloak
the mob fling dung and see the joke.

One possible meaning is that what Christ or the poet sees is not a joke at all, and that we are to recognize a painful gulf between the true tragedy and the mistaken feeling of the mob. But it is also possible to take the lines as conveying to us that what the mob see truly is a joke,

from Christ's and the poet's viewpoint. In this case, the 'joke' could, sarcastically, be that Christ realizes (and the poet with him) that He has been given 'death for a jest' as 'Arius Prays' states immediately before. But the most obvious sense is that the event is a joke, not because of what God does or fails to do, but because what Christ does is amusing and funny. Shocking though the idea in a sense is, even Christ himself appears to be presented as aware of the humorousness of being reduced from 'great and valiant things' to someone who has to 'squint' to perceive the blood dripping 'on the little harsh grass'.

To stress the humour of the situation is not to deny neither its tragedy, nor an element of sarcastic complaint. But it is to insist that Mason's attitude to Christ is ambivalent, and that we cannot and should not deny that fact. In support of my quotation of 'Nails and a Cross', I should like to quote 'Lullaby and Neck-Verse':

Oh snuggle down, my baby, your cheek is soft and warm

A stubble beard unkempt

And sleep you now soundly safe on your mother's arm

Wild oats have threshed out hemp

Ah settle down safe on your loving mother's knee

There is not any hope

While Jesus watches over you, who died on Calvary

A link snake of a rope.

There is a contrast here between the hopeful attitude of the mother to her Christ-like baby and what the italicized lines reveal to us as likely to be the painful reality. That Christ 'died on Calvary' is a fact which can be viewed in two ways: we can accept it gladly as bringing salvation ('Jesus watches over you') or as a grim end because 'There is not any hope'. Presumably Mason wants to alert us to the possibility that the baby will die a meaningless death because Christ's watching will not help; vice versa, contemplation of the baby's end seems to make Mason feel that Christ's death was equally final and futile. But such pessimism does not exclude sympathy with, and possibly belief in the rightness of, the mother's view. The physical reality of death does not make faith impossible, even though we may feel tempted towards despair.

The poet's ambiguous presentation of Christ or Christ-like figures may be evident within one and the same poem, but also when two poems are compared with each other, for example 'Oil and Ointments' and 'Tribute'. The former poem appears to express unmixed, almost sentimental sympathy with Christ. We may suspect that the poet imagines Christ as having a 'longing foot' because he identifies too closely with his hero (in 'Song of Allegiance', immediately before, Mason complains

about his own 'bloody knees'). 'Tribute', by contrast, is a good deal more subtle, and although I am predominantly inclined to read the poem as ironic at the expense of the speaker, we may also see it as sharing a legitimate complaint with him. The speaker explains that he offered hospitality to Christ who came to his door riding upon an ass. He twice mentions that he is 'weak and poor', and Mason may indicate that the speaker shows undue preoccupation with his own state rather than Christ's; also, that the speaker exhibited materialistic, showy extravagance when he lit 'every torch' even 'though it was all brightest day'. At the end of the poem the speaker says that he spilled all his wine and wasted all his unguents, and this may be his fault rather than Christ's. Even so, Christ appears to reject a well-meant gift, and may be considered insensitive and arrogant in doing this.

My argument could be extended to several more poems in which Mason is not preoccupied with Christ, but with other (sometimes related) figures about whom he allows us to feel doubt, as for example in 'The Beggar'. Most frequently, however, the poet seems to raise for us, in brilliantly ambivalent poems, questions of the utmost importance about the worth and meaning of Christ, both as a human figure and as one that may have religious significance. His doubts are no doubt widely shared, and, since they are by no means trivial, this poet deserves an audience in many countries — not just New Zealand. As a Dutchman living in Australia, I feel that my admiration for this poet cannot possibly be parochial. Furthermore, although Mason's concerns are characteristic of our century, there is no reason for regarding them as limited in any way. It always has been, and it always will be, possible to view things the way he does, because those 'things' are central to human existence in spite of certain historical changes. The ambiguity of the poems is not a matter of technical trickery: it is valuable because of the poet's skill, but even more so because of the breadth of his vision. That breadth is not superficial or vaguely non-committal, but the result of honest, intense probing.

NOTES

1. J.E. Weir, *R.A.K. Mason* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1971); Charles Doyle, *R.A.K. Mason* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969). Both critics also refer to other writers and give some account of their work.
2. See R.A.K. Mason, *Collected Poems* (Christchurch: The Pegasus Press, now ed. 1971, from which I quote throughout). The title, 'Ecce Homo', is probably an ironic version of 'Ecce Homo'. Christ is presented as 'a little man', and thus both less grand and more pathetic than many are inclined to think.

- 9 My earlier approach to this and other poems was based on the assumption that Mason was constantly presenting himself as Christ, or at least drawing comparisons between his own situation and Christ's. I develop this view in a paper, 'R. A. K. Mason: the Poet as a Pacific Christ', for a book being published jointly by the East-West Center in Hawaii and the CRNLE at Flinders.

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The Year That Was

This section on the West Indies arrived too late for inclusion in the previous issue.

WEST INDIES

Readers of West Indian literature are beginning to benefit from the publishing trend initiated by Longman's introduction of the Drumbeat series in 1979. For one thing, the series has sharpened the competition between metropolitan publishing firms with an interest in Caribbean writing, successfully challenging the monopoly of Heinemann's Caribbean Writers Series. During the seventies Heinemann had only managed to put out fifteen titles, mostly 'safe' reprints of the works of established authors which were considered suitable for use in secondary schools. Competition from Drumbeat (or perhaps the introduction of the CXC school syllabus in the West Indies) has now roused Heinemann to action, and in the last two years the Caribbean Writers Series has almost doubled its list of available titles. In addition, a shift in publishing policy of utmost importance to young West Indian writers seems to be underway, as publishers begin to risk money on previously unpublished prose authors. Longman, for example, describe Drumbeat as a 'popular paperback series of African and Caribbean fiction, plays and poetry. The series includes established best-sellers, new works by successful authors and first novels by new writers'. Longman launched four 'best-seller' reprints during 1982: Edgar Mitchellholzer's haunting story of a spectral presence that threatens a Guyanese family, *My Bones and My Flute* (1955); Shiva Naipaul's *The Chiff-Chaff GATHERERS* (1973), a scathing account of East Indian life in Trinidad; Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus* (1964), an existentialist treatment of Jamaican slum life and the Rastafarian sect; and Andrew Salkey's political novel *The Late Emancipation of Jerry Stoner* (1968). With the publication of Trevor Rhone's *Old Story Time and Other Plays* Longman present three plays by one of Jamaica's leading dramatists for the first time in published form. The collection contains a valuable introduction to Jamaican theatre, the author, and the plays by West Indian critic Mervyn Morris. Especially noteworthy in terms of the new publishing policy, however, is Drumbeat's publication of *Danny Boy* by the Guyanese writer James Bradner. This account of West Indian adolescence and inter-racial love by an unknown author indicates that Longman are serious about their promise of publishing first novels by new writers.

Heinemann's Caribbean Writers Series has tried to match Drumbeat's initiative with the launching of Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb*. This is probably the first novel to be published by a Belizian author, and it too portrays a West Indian childhood and adolescence. In terms of structure and content *Beka Lamb* is more challenging than *Danny Boy*, but taken together they indicate that there is no dearth of talent among young prose writers in the West Indies. It remains to be seen if the ongoing competition between Heinemann and Longman will produce a sustained new wave of original paperback titles. Both firms have announced new works by established writers in the coming year: Samuel Selvon's

Moses Migrating (Drumhead) and Earl Lovelace's *Jesama's Galypto* (Caribbean Writers Series).

Which is not to say that either publishing firm has lost its obsession with ready-made markets and crowd-pulling names. In her introduction to the reprint of Phyllis Shand Allfrey's *The Orchard House*, Elaine Campbell claims that Heinemann had considered republishing this novel with a foreword by Allfrey's better known sister-Dominican Jean Rhys, but when Rhys died before completing the essay, Heinemann dropped the idea. Fortunately, this early gem of West Indian literature portraying the claustrophobic existence of a declining white Creole elite against the beauty of the Dominican landscape has now been republished by Virago Press, a London-based feminist publishing house. Allfrey's development of female characters, especially the rebellious Miss Joan and the narrator Lally, make the novel an intriguing companion study to Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In her introduction to the novel Elaine Campbell draws attention to a number of points that suggest an influence of Allfrey's early novel on Jean Rhys's work.

Several established West Indian writers published new works during 1982. These include Wilson Harris, *The Angel at the Gate* (London: Faber & Faber); Earl Lovelace, *The Wine of Astonishment* (London: André Deutsch); and Edward Brathwaite, *Son Poem* (Oxford: OUP). In his latest novel Harris grapples with the problem of Utopia on the political, personal and literary level in his by now characteristic fragmentary narrative style. *The Wine of Astonishment*, Lovelace's fourth novel, is almost as powerful as his previous work, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979). The texture of the new novel is Trinidadian to the core. Lovelace is able to take Trinidad Creole as narrative to new technical heights, an accomplishment for which he is rivalled only by Samuel Selvon. *The Wine of Astonishment* is built around the struggle of the members of the Spiritual Baptist sect for freedom of worship, a struggle that symbolises Lovelace's conviction that the strength of the people lies in their ability to organise themselves, and constantly to renew their sense of identity in the face of culturally alienating forces and rampant political corruption. Brathwaite's *Son Poem* is the second part of a new trilogy which begins with *Mother Poem*. Set in Barbados, this sequence of poems attempts a 'male' history of the island as a counterpart to the 'female' history offered in *Mother Poem*. The poem works on several levels, depicting the general fate of the black man since his arrival in Barbados, the growing-up experiences of an individual from childhood through adolescence to manhood, and the continuous chain formed by generations of grandfathers, fathers and sons.

Allison Busby (London) published another novel by Roy Heath, his sixth to date, entitled *Kunko or The Man Who Could Not Keep His Mouth Shut*. The novel is an entertaining account of the career of a picaresque Guyanese trickster figure, set against the backdrop of Guyana's current economic woes. Two novels for younger readers deserve special attention: Michael Anthony's *The Bright Road to El Dorado* (Nelson Caribbean) and Margaret McInosh's *The Raid* (Heinemann Caribbean). Both deal with the early inhabitants of the Caribbean and build their stories around the exploits of Amerindian youngsters. McInosh focuses on the clash between Arawaks and Caribs in Jamaica long before the coming of the Spaniards, and Anthony builds his story around the rivalry between the Englishman Sir Walter Raleigh and the Spaniard Antonio de Berrio. The two explorers believe the stories of El Dorado spun for them by the Arawak boy Ayun who by feeding their greed encourages them to fight each other and proceed to the Guyanas, leaving Trinidad and its Arawak population in peace. In both novels young readers are encouraged to identify with the adolescent Arawak heroes who are presented as history makers in their own right. Walter Raleigh seen through Amerindian eyes is a far cry from

the honourable hero of British tales. For Ayun 'all the sea people were blood-thirsty' and 'would seek to destroy the Arawaks'.

The most important critical work to appear in 1982 was Sandra Pouchet Paquet's *The Novels of George Lamming* (London: Heinemann), a compact 180-page study that concentrates on the political nature of Lamming's oeuvre and devotes a chapter to each of Lamming's six novels.

During the year 1982 there was no shortage of Caribbean literary anthologies and poetry collections, with new titles appearing in London and the West Indies. Heinemann and Nelson both launched major anthologies: John Figueroa's *An Anthology of African and Caribbean Writing in English* (Heinemann), which is meant as a textbook for the 'Third World Studies' course at The Open University, is a voluminous compendium of 297 pages. It will surely serve as a valuable introduction for newcomers to West Indian literature but the more advanced student will be struck by the imbalance in quality and range between the prose and poetry offered. The short stories and extracts from novels are almost all written by the better known writers who started publishing in the 1950s and 1960s — Mittelholzer, Naipaul, Lamming, Gollumote, Hearne, etc. — whereas the poetry section offers a chronologically broader and more representative range of works from Claude McKay and George Campbell to Dennis Scott and Honor Ford-Smith, at the same time allowing for sufficient emphasis on the work of major Caribbean poets such as Martin Carter, Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite. Kenneth Ramchand's collection of *Best West Indian Stories* (Nelson) is by contrast very up to date and almost flirts in its selectivity. It offers, side by side with the work of well known writers (e.g. Anthony, Mair, Harris, Rhys, Selvon), some excellent work by young writers, most of whom have only had short stories previously published in local magazines (e.g. Janice Shinebourne, Wayne Brown, Noel Woodroffe, Noel Williams). The anthology is able to trace continuities of development rather than canonising the already established.

A third, quite different anthology appeared as a special issue of *Ambit*, a quarterly of poems, short stories, drawings, and criticism published in London. Most of the contributions are Britain-based West Indian writers and the collection offers an interesting cross section of today's 'black' writing in the metropolis. *Ambit 91: Caribbean Special Issue* can be ordered from *Ambit*, 17, Priory Gardens, Highgate, London N6 5QY.

During 1982 local publishing within the West Indies seems to have concentrated on poetry collections and anthologies. In Jamaica, two noteworthy collections of new work were published: Beverley Brown's *Dreams Diary* and Dennis Scott's *Dreadwalk*. Mervyn Morris of UWI Jamaica edited a new Bennett anthology, *Louise Bennett: Selected Poems* (Kingston: Sangster's Book Stores). This is a solid work of 175 pages, complete with an introduction, notes to the text, critical commentary and teaching questions. It brings together the best of Bennett's work in a form well suited for use in the classroom or on campuses wherever West Indian literature is offered. From Barbados come new collections by Tony Kellman: *In Depths of Burning Light*, with an introduction by Edward Brathwaite, and Bruce St. John: *Rumbatuk 1*. Bruce St. John also edited *Ascent — La Subata — La Montée*, the first volume in a poetry chap book series planned by the University of the West Indies in Barbados. This volume contains poetry by the Guyanese writer Mark McWatt, Vincentian David Williams, Antiguan John Hewlett, Barbadian Esther Phillips and Bruce St. John himself.

One piece of trivial literature published in Jamaica perhaps deserves mention. Perry Henzell, of *The Harder They Come* movie fame, presents in *Power Game* (Kingston: Ten-A Publications) a racy potpourri of all the clichés of modern-day Jamaican life, including gang wars, the ganja trade, the IMFqueens, Rastaa, sex and violence ... and a

coup d'état. Does this signal the start of a local 'Mills and Boon' tradition? Perhaps, since the average West Indian reader, like the average anywhere, will insist on reading trivia, he may be better served by reading 'authentic' trivia rather than the imported version!

Those who can read German may want to look at Rainer Epp and Klaus Frederking (eds.), *Dub Version. Über Jamaikas Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: Rothbuch), which contains articles on Jamaica's culture and society by Jamaicans Tony Boguea, John Maxwell and Michael Cooke as well as an article on Jamaican literature by Trinidadian Rhonda Cobham. Jürgen Martini's *Gesellschaft und Kultur der Karibik* (University of Bremen) is a collection of the papers given at the first interdisciplinary Caribbean Studies conference in West Germany in 1981.

REINHARD SANDER

Book Reviews

Janet Frame, *To the Is-Land: An Autobiography*. New York: George Braziller, 1982. 235 pp. \$US10.95.

To the Is-Land is the first of a planned 3-volume autobiography by New Zealand writer Janet Frame and covers Frame's early years up to the time that she completed high school and left home for Dunedin teachers' training college.

The title *To the Is Land* refers to a book of the same name that the child Janet read and pronounced as 'To the Island', thinking of that land as different from the Was land and the Future. In recreating the world of her childhood, Frame relives a continuous present, when everything in one's waking life is or is becoming. The title can also imply the world beyond the islands of New Zealand that keeps asserting itself in New Zealand consciousness. For Janet Frame, always, there has been no removal of herself to another world of the imagination, simply the other world's arrival into the world of everyday routines. The other world is one of imagination, poetry, and romance, but also one of brutality, even horror. Frame herself shows its two sides in the chapter where she tells of her most extended venture into that world through writing a number of poems: she concludes the chapter with the news of the outbreak in the other world of World War II.

It is doubtful that either of the later two volumes will deal with 'The Making of a Writer' (as a series is called in the *New York Times Book Review*), a process that is a mystery to the writer as well as to everyone else. This first volume shows Frame's interest in literature, especially in poetry, and records with an amused indulgence her schoolgirl's attempts at writing, but it does not attempt to explain the creative impulse that led her to produce thus far nine novels, four books of short stories, and a book of poetry. Perhaps

because her creative gift makes her different in New Zealand society, a society that has less tolerance for difference than almost any other Western culture, Frame is concerned with stressing her ordinariness and her immersion in the practical world; and her style is accordingly concrete and conversational, quite unlike the evocative, poetic style of her fiction. Her childhood was a pretty normal one, apart from the poverty that constantly beset her parents; nevertheless she emphasizes that the family had plenty to eat in that rich agricultural land, even eating luxuriously by most standards. There is little sign of the woman who was to emerge as New Zealand's most important novelist to date; that development seems to have surprised Janet Frame as much as anyone.

Although she does not raise the question of where her creative gift came from, Frame clearly ponders it throughout this volume of her intended trilogy. To some degree, she implies, the creative impulse was engendered by her mother, who wrote poetry and encouraged a love for poetry in her children. But Frame seems to look upon creative inspiration as in the main a sort of 'fit' sent by God. It is linked in her mind with the epilepsy of her brother. She herself never directly makes that association, but she is so preoccupied with her brother's epilepsy in this volume that one gradually comes to see the parallels she has perhaps sensed between creative inspiration and epilepsy; both seem to come from outside, beyond one's control or choosing, and remove one for a time from the ordinary world. Creative activity like epilepsy, brings the intrusion of 'that' world into 'this' (to use the terms that have become standard in literary criticism of Frame's writings).

The appeal of this first volume of Frame's autobiography lies not in what it tells us of the future writer, though her self-portrait is engaging in its candor, but in the recreation of childhood in rural and remote New Zealand in the late 1920s and early 1930s and in the portrait of her mother. The account of her childhood is simple and unpretentious, with a good deal of charm; and if one was born before, say, 1955 (before the onset of the affluence which, in spite of its earnings and goings, has transformed Western lifestyles), one will no doubt find oneself reliving one's own childhood along with Janet Frame. The 30s and 40s were the period of Hollywood-inspired dreams and ambitions; they were the years of Saturday afternoon movies. The portrait of Lottie Frame, Janet's mother, is like a Rembrandt portrait in that her warm tones take on a more intense quality because of the dark background against which she is seen.

Because it is more straightforward than any of Frame's works of fiction, *To the Is-Land* is likely at first to seem slight, but it is in fact a well proportioned and carefully considered work. For instance, it is exactly halfway through the book that she records how she gained admission to the world of books, with the tremendous new stimulus they offered for her imaginative development, when she received a library subscription as the prize for being the top student of her school. Every so often, too, Frame offers an arresting perspective upon life, like her image of Time from early childhood to adolescence as being first horizontal (progressive), then vertical ('with events stacked one upon the other'), then a whirlpool (when memories do not arrange themselves for observation but whirl around, different memories rising to the surface at different times). This distinction is not only fascinating in itself: it illuminates a central problem of organization that writers of autobiography have to contend with as they offer their memories and experiences, and explains the blurring that commonly occurs as they deal with their adolescent years.

The Janet Frame who emerges from this volume of the *Autobiography* is a very practical person, closely involved with her family and the family animals. This portrait of herself is a healthy corrective to those who would think of her as torn by *dragos* and living in a world of the imagination rather than the world of reality. It is mostly a happy book; if there are any indications of trouble lying ahead, they may be in her intimations (still a

the edge of her consciousness) of the creative spirit growing strong within her like a malady – like her brother's epilepsy – that will seize her and control her life, setting her increasingly apart in a society intolerant of the different and uncomfortable with the creative. The outbreak of her creative spirit lies ahead, in the second volume of her autobiography, which is now near completion.

JOHN BESTON

Fay Zwicky, ed., *Quarry*. Freemantle Arts Centre, 1981. \$6.00.

If little of the writing in this anthology of poetry by 36 Western Australians has the charged excitement of the genuinely first-rate, there are nevertheless other, by no means inconsiderable virtues on display. Most poets gain from exposure in this kind of useful showcase, and the interest of *Quarry* is not restricted to residents of W.A. because Fay Zwicky has rightly avoided any temptation to select stereotypical 'regional' writing. (There are also good photographs by Susan Eve Barrow.)

There's a fair variety here of theme and personal response, if not of poetic tactics. Physical and mental landscapes are in creative relationship; the firm sense of Western Australia's hard terrain (both rural and urban) is rarely unaccompanied by the potent grip of memory, feeling, history, or geographical displacement (several of the poets are British or American immigrants). Murray Jennings pays sensitive tribute to Tom Roberts, the Victorian age painter of 'The Golden Fleece, Shearing at Newstead', but it's the life which art represented that engages him rather than the painting, and beyond that the death of those who lived that life. In 'Ballad of Glad Women' Alan Alexander too looks back, beyond the page where he read of them, to 'Cathleen / The Deport Workhorse',

Edna,
The Liverpool Swan,
From the parish
Of cold dockland
Cast into
The venereal sun

and Tobacco Mary who

With her children
Made the wild bush
Her garden.

Jenny de Garis registers the shock of Australia for an English 'Migrant' but learns to open her heart and finds

Sudden great constellations were burning the night,
and I saw the world turning and singing
in a rainbow aura of light.

Nicholas Hasluck contrasts a modest awareness of natural mystery and non-human time-scales in his group of poems on 'Rottnest Island' with a sharply funny poem on flat-dwelling. Hal Colebatch also introduces a welcome satirical note in 'Over-exposure To Social Realism' (a poem in the manner of Bruce Dawe). Wendy Jenkins in her fine group 'Names' shows she has a good ear, and seems one of the most promising younger poets. I liked, too, Fay Zwicky's extract from *Ark Forces*, which shows a talent for asperity informed by judicial passion. She has assembled an interesting and intelligent collection.

RODNEY PYBUS

Mark O'Connor, *The Fiesta of Men*. Hale & Remonger, Sydney, 1983.
\$11.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper.

Mark O'Connor has been on a Grand Tour round the sites of Graeco-Roman civilisation. He's also been to Spain, Yugoslavia, Holland, Norway and England, before returning to Australia. The itinerary gives his new collection structure and coherence up to a point, but that point is unfortunately where the poetry should start but too often doesn't in the European part of the book. Many of these are tourist-poems: while the genre has sound Romantic precedents (though pace O'Connor Keats didn't go to Italy to die), he has stayed too close to the Bardolatry. With one or two exceptions, like the spirited 'Riding a Hired Lambretta in the Fifth Lane of the Autostrade to Visit the Underworld...' where Fellini and 'the Stygian Tomato' Co-op' keep us rightly with at least one foot in the 20th century, these poems about Greek islands, ancient monuments, Atlantis, etc. fail to engage with sufficient conviction, authority or originality their theme of the relationship between present place and past culture. The views are closely observed but they remain views. The uncertainty in his reactions to antiquity comes through in odd ways: Greek cliffs are 'baked like fissured scones' and 'cracked and crusted like meringue', while on Patmos the land has become 'as holed as Swiss cheese' with 'gruyere strata' in the hills. And his ear seems as unsure as his 'appetitive' imagery. The majority of these poems are in incommensurate iambs, the rhythms veering from mellifluous to lamely flat, so that they are, finally, a disconcerting distraction. It's almost as if he felt his themes and (mainly) decorous diction demanded traditional blank verse but didn't quite dare to take the plunge.

While I'm not suggesting that O'Connor shouldn't have used his travel award, a remarkable change for the better comes over his Australian poems. The writing has more celebratory vitality and less worry, there's a captivating variety of tone, and he seems altogether more at home with his medium. Particularly good are poems about Dunk Island off Queensland (especially 'Planting the Dunk Botanic Gardens', a brilliant bravura piece of botany-in-verse), and 'The Island Wife', a taut 9-line erotic tribute to Papaya, whose sensuous compression is a virtue O'Connor could have employed more often in some of these 'strange scrappy chatings with the Muse'.

RODNEY PYBUS

Ian Stephen and Sam Maynard, *Malin, Hebrides, Minches*. Dangaroo Press, Geding Søvej 21, 8381 Mundelstrup, Denmark. Dkr 65/ £4.95.

In *Malin, Hebrides, Minches* Ian Stephen, poet, and Sam Maynard, photographer, explore 'some of the experience, as well as the images, of life on «The Long Islands» of Lewis and Harris'. The two were drawn to each other's work by a recognition of 'shared themes in our different mediums', a recognition which led to a close collaboration, sometimes a poem inspiring a photograph, and vice versa, while at others 'this poem and that photograph, independently done, seemed to belong together'.

'Frontispiece', the opening poem, proclaims the poet's area of concern and by implication that of the photographer. Had he been born elsewhere he might have explored classical myth in a high style, or written lyrics out of lush (but tame?) buttercup fields,

But I come from Western Isle
and do not sing but speak
on words that are the breeze
of harbour and moor
and corner of street.

So, language is to be restrained, severe even, but the language nonetheless of speech, dealing with nature and men in the one environment he knows. The photographs offer a parallel visual constraint, emphasised by a retaining, black line frame.

Living in the Hebrides, as in all the Celtic countries, one can't help being aware of the present lived out in the context of the past — the immediate past of an almost timeless way of life, destroyed this century by modern civilisation, and behind that a prehistory merging with the landscape and geological time. Stephen and Maynard are well attuned to this, and it provides the unifying principle of the present collection.

'May Hiorrach' tells how May would like to go back to her old home on Eilean Hiorr (St Kilda),

the habited place at
the edge of the lesser Atlantic fathoms
before the drop

— if it had a roof, any kind of roof. But she lives next door in a cul-de-sac 'and seems/sure-settled'. The facing photograph shows a delicate, thin, ageing woman, hands resting on the edge of a modern stainless steel kitchen sink, with teacups and a stainless steel teapot on the draining board. She gazes out of the window with almost a smile.

Poem and visual image combine perfectly here, and set the tone for much of the book. Those who think of the islands as a place of retreat from industrial civilisation are suffering a Romantic delusion. May Hiorrach has stainless steel kitchen units; a noisy helicopter lays power lines to a remote hamlet approached only by sea; the rotting hulk of a car has been dumped in a beautiful estuary. Stornoway has a brash new council housing estate; there is a NATO base nearby, and so on. Many of the poems and photographs force home these facts: opposite the poem with the laconic title 'Oil Associated Industry' is a murky photograph in close up of a welder at work, 'U.F.O.' painted on his vest. A photograph entitled 'Manor Farm housing estate, known as «Colditz»', shows a drab cluster of modern houses, dirty with smoke, and in the foreground the ragged ends of

fields naked out with barbed wire — a scene that could be on the edge of any new housing estate anywhere. The poem 'Airigh na Beist' (a note tells us that this was 'a once-rich place of summer-pastures, outside Stornoway') tells how the white hare has been driven from the pastures, to be replaced by a midden and a television mast, twin symbols of modern living. The accompanying photograph shows a Singer sewing machine dumped in a pool, and the upside down reflection in the water of a man striding quickly by. As the title implies, the old language has been pushed aside too, and the poem ends by reiterating (though less certainly than before) 'it may be good/ that we are gone from here'. I am not sure who 'we' refers to, but the poem suggests to me that it may be the voice of those who once pastured their animals here on Airigh na Beist, and who needed no footnote to tell them what these beautiful words meant.

Maynard and Sorphen are careful to avoid romanticizing the past: May will never go back to Eilean Hìort, roof or no roof, because (the implication is) life with its modern conveniences is easier in Stornoway — she 'seems/ sure-settled'. The past, however, is continually present to us in the poems and photographs, a celebration and a warning of something important we may have lost, for all that life is more convenient now. 'Laxdale Autumn' is about the disappearance of the salmon and the old fishing ways; but the poet goes to the estuary anyway to fish for eel or flounder,

if not for market by cart or string,
then only now to know they live
on or under the wet flat of mud.

Everywhere there are the ruins: a derelict whaling station, the photograph showing broken timbers, abandoned buildings, and cows grazing in the tall grass — nothing left, as the poem reminds us, of 'sea-bulls and calving mammals' (or by implication of the men who slaughtered them) except

Sleeped traces ... [that] sank to fertilize
this broken slope
of incidental grass.

A ruined Baptist chapel on a headland draws the dry conclusion:

some congregation
either went adrift
or further afield.

(*'Baptist Church, South-East Ness'*)

And behind the recently lost past of the whalers, the fishermen and the chapel communities is the ancient and hardly known culture of the Picts. A photograph entitled 'Stone Detail, Broch, Dun Carloway' shows a close up of the dry stone work of a broch, as sharp and fresh as the day it was built. The stones were given shape and significance by humans, but humans who have long since disappeared with their culture and their language. In the photographs of deserted whaling stations and chapels you can imagine still the kind of life lived by those who built and used them; but in the photograph of the broch it is the stone which dominates now with its whorled grain, and the imposed pattern, the human intention, is all but lost. It is this prehistory of the island which dominates the end of the collection. In the poem 'Satellite Stone Circle, Isle of Lewis', the

religious purpose of the stones has not merely been forgotten, but has been subtly changed by the chemistry of time and the elements, so that now the stones seem 'shaped more by winds/ than by hands'. Even the modern surround of fence and gates seems to be trying to efface itself, trying to 'merge in' with the earth.

'Rowan and Hawthorn' is spoken by an anonymous voice from the distant human past of the island, begging the living to plant a rowan 'For my imagination now', and a hawthorn 'for healing'. 'Root that for me/ and for us all.' It is faced by a photograph showing what looks like an ancient dry stone enclosure in the foreground, with a stunted, leafless tree; while across a narrow straight, several crofts stare from a dim stretch of bleak, hilly ground. It is the landscape that dominates here — bare hills, inlets, moorland — and human habitation is a small, integrated part of a greater whole. The last photograph, 'Cliffs & Sea: Valda, Uig', shows a line of waves shining in bright moonlight, reaching towards utterly black, featureless cliffs. The accompanying poem, called simply 'Lyric', turns away from humanity, or at least the modern Western version of it, and in a kind of love song celebrates the basic colours of sea, sky and shell:

Look wider than the broadest bay
yet give me blue of mussel shell
and yellow of the winter sky
but grudge the garish red of
lobster, highly served.

Turn to the horizon edge
but be with me.
We will kiss the salty tongue.
Give and keep the mollusc blue.

In the poems, Ian Stephen has developed a spare, pared-down style, and a voice which is deliberately non-emotional, describing in a matter-of-fact way (for the most part) what he hears, sees, remembers. In this way he achieves a verbal equivalent to Sam Maynard's striking and austere camera work, and the result is a close and usually successful interdependence of poem and photograph. A collection of poems alone, though, would demand a modification of this style, so that more of what is contained visually in the photographs would be present in the words through a more powerful use of image.

Mulla, Hebrides, Minckley is very well produced. Its large format and sewn pages, with poems sensitively spaced to enhance their austerity and a high level of reproduction in the photographs, make the book a pleasure to handle. I hope Dangaroo Press will continue to support poetry, and photography, in this way.

JOHN BARNIE

Shirley Neuman & Robert Wilson, *Conversations with Robert Kroetsch*. NeWest Press, Edmonton, 1982. 246 pp. Can.\$ 7.95 (paper).

This is the third volume in the Western Canadian Literary Documents Series whose general editor is Shirley Neuman. The inaugural volume was Robert Kroetsch, *The Crow Journals* (1980). Volume II: *Essays By and About Rudy Wiebe*, edited by W.J. Keith (1981). Along with the present volume the series offers an insight into the works and the ideas of two of the most talented and exciting writers not only in Western Canada, but in the entire country.

Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson are not only interviewers, they are also constructive contributors to the discussion as well. Throughout the volume the flow of conversation is broken by quotations in italics that substantiate and sometimes also contradict what is being said. These quotations come from Kroetsch's own work and from fellow writers, critics, linguists, anthropologists and others who have been important to his development.

The conversation is divided into four sections: 'Influence', 'Game', 'Myth', and 'Narration'. In 'Influence' Kroetsch discusses his affinity to Spanish and Latin American literature ranging from Cervantes to Borges, Marquez and Neruda. In 'Game' the idea of literature as a game based on a set of rules is explored, and Kroetsch's favourite motif of the labyrinth ('culture as a labyrinthine godgame', p. 78) is drawn into the discussion. One has never been in doubt that myth is central to Kroetsch's work, this section reminds one of the fact that Kroetsch is a Western Canadian writer who, along with e.g. Margaret Laurence and Rudy Wiebe, has found a discussion of the myth/history relation particularly urgent. One of the many topics discussed in 'Narration' is an attempt to define the difference between Canadian and American writers. At the end of this section the interviewers push Kroetsch towards a definition of his concept of post modernism. At the centre is his emphasis on 'the act of narration over signification' and his idea that 'mimesis becomes what I call the refusal of meaning; through our recognising it as refusal of meaning, it in turn starts to become meaning' (p. 199).

This is an extremely useful volume which makes interesting reading not only for the academic but for anyone interested in Canadian literature.

JØRN CARLSEN

Coming Events

Workshop on Women Writers

There will be a one-day workshop on 7 January 1984 on six Commonwealth women novelists, introductory talks on selected writers followed by workshop sessions centred on specific novels. Full details from Maggie Buncher, Education Department, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ.

Australian Studies Week

As its annual English Week, the Polytechnic of North London will be having an Australian Studies week (mainly devoted to literature), 19-25 March 1984. Persons interested in attending should contact John Thiesse, Department of Language and Literature, Polytechnic of North London, London NW5 3LB.

Conference on Popular Culture and the Media

There will be a conference on Popular Culture and the Media to be held at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Nigeria) on 16-19 April 1984, under the sponsorship of the Department of English and Drama. Further enquiries to the Conference Organisers, 'Popular Culture and the Media', Department of English and Drama, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

Canadian Arts Festival and Conference, Aarhus

The English and French departments of the University of Aarhus will sponsor a Canadian Arts Festival and Conference at Aarhus University from 30 April - 5 May 1984. The conference will concentrate on three themes:

1. The Literature of the Canadian West
2. Women in Canadian Literature
3. Quebecois Literature

People wishing to attend, to offer papers, or who require further information should contact Jørn Carlsen, Department of English, University of Aarhus, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark.

Fourth International Conference on African Literature and Language

The Fourth International Conference on African Literature and Language organised by the Department of English and Literary Studies of the University of Calabar will be held from 1 to 5 May 1984. The theme of the conference is 'Literature and Politics in Africa'. The theme for the Workshop on the Teaching of English is 'English and Lingua Francas'. Papers are invited on the above topics for the conference.

For further information and application forms, write to Mrs Wilson-Tagoe, Co-ordinator, 4th International Conference on African Literature and Language, Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Australian Literature Conference Berne, 17-20 October 1984

The Department of English of the University of Berne (Switzerland) is planning to hold a conference on Australian literature from 17-20 October 1984. The theme of this conference will be: *Ways: Australia's Literary Response*. The registration fee will be SFr.50.-. We expect to have contributions from leading Australian scholars and writers (we are hoping to receive an Australian Literature Board Grant to aid us in bringing speakers from Australia). Accommodation will be arranged locally. Please note that there are daily air links to Berne from Paris and London. Those interested in presenting a paper or simply in attending the conference should write to the organisers not later than 1 March 1984. If you wish to present a paper, please enclose an abstract of 150 words. The final programme will be sent to all those who have responded to the present announcement. Correspondence address: English Department, University of Berne, Gesellschaftsstrasse 6, CH-3002 Berne, Switzerland.

RUDOLF BADER
WERNER SENN

New Writing in Africa: Continuity and Change

A conference is being jointly organised by the Commonwealth Institute and the Africa Centre to take place in London from 1st to 3rd November 1984. It will be pan-African in scope and concentrate on new areas of African writing; the working title is *New Writing in Africa: Continuity and Change*. Topics for discussion will include: oral and written literature in African languages; writing by women; children's literature; writing for radio, film and television; new critical approaches; developments in publishing.

Taking place concurrently over one or two weeks will be *Bookweek Africa*, a major exhibition of publications from Africa, organised jointly by Hans Zell Publications and the Africa Centre. It is envisaged that this event will be even wider in scope and interest than the first successful *Bookweek Africa* held in June 1982 at the Africa Centre.

A further dimension to the conference will be a cultural programme of poetry, music, theatre and film, presented at various London venues by African and Black British groups and individuals.

Further information from: The Steering Committee, c/o Alastair Niven, Africa Centre, 38 King Street, London WC2E 8JT or Maggie Butcher, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 5UK.

INDEX

Volume Four, Numbers 1 and 2, 1982

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

Bryden, Diana: 'Wordsworth's Daffodils: A Recurring Motif in Contemporary Canadian Literature' 6 (2)

Campbell, Elaine: 'An Expatriate at Home: Dominica's Elma Napier' 82 (1)

Campbell, Elaine: 'Reflections of Obeah in Jean Rhys' Fiction' 42 (2)

Chapman, Michael: 'Douglas Livingstone — Poet' 105 (2)

Gray, Stephen: 'The Comic Theatre of Stephen Black in South Africa' 62 (1)

Lindfors, Bernth: 'The New David Mallu' 150 (1)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o: 'A Statement' 135 (2)

Nwankwo, Chimalum: 'Uburu asa! Freedom now!' 125 (2)

Sharrad, Paul: 'Does Wongar Matter?' 57 (1)

Sepin, Robert B.: 'When de Saints Go Ma'chin Home: Sterling Brown's Blueprint for a New Negro Poetry' 91 (1)

Strauss, Jennifer: 'An Unsentimental Romance: Christina Stead's *For Love Alone*' 82 (2)

Tharu, Susie: 'Decoding Anand's Humanism' 99 (2)

Tomaselli, Kieran G.: 'Theatre, Repression and the Working Class in South Africa' 119 (2)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Enecheta, Buchi: 'A Nigerian Writer Living in London' 114 (1)

FICTION

Campbell, Doreen: 'Five Stars for Mr Tompkins' 108 (1)

Clancy, John: 'The Lie of the Land' 1 (1)

Leonard, June Walker: 'The Room' 1 (2)

Mari, Tololwa: 'Portrait of a Memzahib' 120 (2)

Vidler, David: 'Big Smoke Woman' 76 (2)

FILM

Dohren, Livio & Pat: 'Old Myths and New Delusions: Peter Weir's Australia' 61 (2)

INTERVIEWS

Ausley, Thea 20 (1)

Ekweni, Cyprian 124 (1)

Lesing, Dora 95 (2)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o 126 (2)

Rushdie, Salman 17 (2)

PHOTOGRAPHS

Maynard, Sam 77 (1)

Maynard, Sam: 'Supermarker' 51 (2)

POETRY

Agard, John: 'Rainbow' 106 (1)

Brash, Nora Vagi: 'Total Eclipse' 107 (1)

- Choyce, Lealey: 'Anger Makes a Comeback' 5 (2)
 'The Garden'
- Coslet, Tony: 'The Verse Master' 80 (1)
- Cross, Riana: 'The Elephant Who Would Be a Poet' 27 (2)
 'Fresh-cut Flowers'
 'Poetics'
- Duffin, Ken: 'Recurring Poem' 4 (2)
- Gondock, S. Tunde: 'Me and Mine' 5 (2)
- Livingstone, Douglas: 'Lake Morning in Autumn' 117 (2)
 'Gentling a Wildcat'
- Nichols, Grace: 'Selections from "I is a long-memoried Woman"' 40 (2)
- O'Connor, Mark: 'A Javanese Field' 16 (1)
- O'Connor, Mark: 'The Triumph of Death' 56 (2)
 'From the Terrace'
- Sam, Agnes: 'What Passing Bells...' 51 (1)
- Sharsky, Michael: 'Sunday, Waitakere' 18 (1)
 'Thoughts on Walking Through a Northern Highlands Town'
- Sorenstad, Glen: 'Autumnal Prelude' 14 (2)
 'Smoke Haze in Saskatoon'
 'Lia'
- Stephen, Ian: 'Was Like' 75 (1)
 'Two Wings'
 'Fathom of Tweed'
- Walker, Brian: 'Galahad's Monday Morning' 81 (1)
- Watson, Stephen: 'Years' 56 (1)

REVIEWS

- Dennett, Bruce, ed.: *Cross Currents: Magazines and Newspapers in Australian Literature*
 — Bruce A Claffins Ross 149 (2)
- Burton, S H. and C J H. Chacksfield: *African Poetry in English: An introduction to practical criticism* — Kirsten Holst Petersen 194 (1)

- Cowasjee, Saroo, ed.: *Stories from the Raj, From Ripping to Independence* — Donald W. Hannah 188 (1)
- Di Michele, Mary: *Mimesis and Other Poems* — John Barnie 182 (1)
- Ebejer, Francis: *Come Again in Spring* — Donald W. Hannah 190 (1)
- Ebejer, Francis: *Requests for a Mafia Fugit (or The Interrogation)* — Donald W. Hannah 190 (1)
- Grace, Patricia: *The Dream Sleepers and Other Stories* — Rose Marie Boston 169 (2)
- Hesckine, H. P., ed.: *The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Verse* — Mark O'Connor 167 (1)
- Jumbhan, Kenjo: *The White Man of God* — Taycha Ngenge 194 (1)
- Lovelace, Earl: *The Wine of Disenchantment* — Phillip Langran 157 (2)
- Malouf, David: *First Things Last* — Mark O'Connor 178 (1)
- Mayne, Seymour: *The Impossible Promised Land* — John Barnie 185 (1)
- Monkman, Leslie: *A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English Canadian Literature* — Jørn Carlsen 148 (2)
- Murray, Les A.: *The Boys Who Stole the Funeral* — John Barnie 173 (1)
- Murray, Les A.: *The Vernacular Republic* — Ian Stephen 154 (2)
- Murray, Les A.: *Equanimities* — Ian Stephen 154 (2)
- Nesbeker, Helen/Jean Rhys: *Woman in Passage* — Elaine Campbell 155 (2)
- Petersen, Kirsten Holm and Anna Rutherford, eds.: *Cowdies and Kobos: The West African Oral Tale and Short Story* — John Thilence 146 (2)
- Sherman, Kenneth: *The Cost of Living* — John Barnie 182 (1)
- Sead, C. K.: *In the Glass Cage* — Carole Davis 158 (2)
- Sutakever, Abraham: *Burnt Pearls: Ghazal Poems* — John Barnie 185 (1)
- Turner, Brian: *Ancutors* — Kirsten Holm Petersen 193 (1)
- Wainwright, Andy: *After the War* — John Barnie 182 (1)

Journals

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Edited by Hans M. Zell

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Edited by Angus Calder & Alastair Brown

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ARIEL

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EDITOR: IAN ADAM

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ARIEL is largely a critical journal, but reserves some 10% of its pages for the publication of original poetry and original translations of poetry into English. It strives to represent here, as in the articles and reviews, a broad range of achievement in the English-speaking world.

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